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ARCHIVAL DISSONANCE IN THE CUBAN POST-EXILE HISTORICAL NOVEL

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ARCHIVAL DISSONANCE IN THE CUBAN POST-EXILE HISTORICAL NOVEL

by

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Dedication

This dissertation is for Joanna, Samuel, and James.

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This dissertation investigates a common methodology of staging Cuban and Cuban exile historiography in three novels by Roberto G. Fernández (b. 1950), Antonio Benítez Rojo (1931-2005), and Ana Menéndez (b. 1970). This methodology develops a counterpoint between, first, the diagetic (strictly fictional) stories of characters who attempt to research or write Cuban history from exile and, second, the extradiagetic (extra or non-fictional) use of actual sources and tendencies of Cuban, Caribbean, and U.S. historiography structuring the narrative fiction. Reinforcing the density of the discursive field, the authors additionally incorporate works of Spanish, Latin-American, Caribbean, and/or Cuban literatures as constitutive elements of their fictions' extradiagetic "noise."

I make the case that Fernández's, Benítez Rojo's, and Menéndez's U.S.-produced historical novels develop a critical and investigative approach to the politics of Cuban exile and diaspora historiography. As such, they participate in the emergence of a post-exile Cuban literature, in dialogue with broader Caribbean and Latin American literatures. I analyze what I call *archival dissonance* in (1) the first, paradigm-setting novel in the body of historical fiction narrated from the frame of a dystopian future by Roberto G. Fernández, *La vida es un special*; (2) in Ana Menéndez's use of reader response and archival research methods to critically recast a history of family division under the Cuban Revolution as popular romance fiction in *Loving Che* and (3) in the only novel Antonio Benítez Rojo lived to write in the United States, *Mujer en traje de batalla* (about the accidental arrival to New York City of the "first female Cuban physician" Enriqueta Faber, 1791-1827). Departing from the methodology presented with the narrative structure of each of the novels, in which a diagetic process of a character's reading and/or writing Cuban history from a site of exile is countered by extradiagetic documentary and metaliterary information, I examine each novel's metacritical approach to the politics of exile and diaspora historiography, as well as toward Cuban, Caribbean, Latin American, and/or U.S. literary textual economies.

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Chapter One: Introduction: Archival Dissonance as Metacritical Methodology in the Cuban Post-Exile Historical Novel

The novels by the Cuban-born writers Roberto G. Fernández (b. 1950), Antonio Benítez Rojo (1931-2005), and Ana Menéndez (b. 1970) that explore both Cuban and Cuban exile historiography –Fernández's *La vida es un special ~~$1.50~~ .75* (1981), *La montaña rusa* (1985), *Raining Backwards* (1988), and *Holy Radishes!* (1995); Benítez Rojo's *Mujer en traje de batalla* (2001); and Menéndez's *Loving Che* (2004)—are considered significant contributions to late-twentieth and early-twenty-first century U.S. Cuban narrative fiction (Alvarez Borland, *Cuban American* 97, "Figures" 31-46; González Echevarría, Rev. 18; Irizarry 602; Pérez Firmat, *Life* 144). Their work is dissimilar in narrative structure, language, tone, the period of Cuban history portrayed in the fiction, and the generation of Cuban émigré writer that each author represents. Yet their novels share, as is investigated in this dissertation, a common methodology of staging Cuban and Cuban exile historiography within a doubly-framed fictional narrative. This methodology develops a counterpoint between, first, the diagetic (strictly fictional) stories of characters who attempt to research or write Cuban history from exile and, second, the extradiagetic (extra or non-fictional) use of actual sources and tendencies of Cuban, Caribbean, and U.S. historiography structuring the narrative fiction. Reinforcing the density of the discursive field, the authors additionally incorporate works of Spanish, Latin-American, Caribbean, and/or Cuban literatures as constitutive elements of their fictions' extradiagetic "noise."

This dissertation makes the case that Fernández's, Benítez Rojo's, and Menéndez's U.S.-produced historical novels develop a skeptical, metacritical approach to the politics of Cuban exile and diaspora historiography. As such, they participate in the emergence of a post-exile U.S. Cuban literature, in dialogue with broader Cuban and Latin American literatures. In the chapters that follow I analyze what I call *archival dissonance* in (1) the first, paradigm-setting novel in the body of historical fiction narrated from the frame of a dystopian future by Roberto G. Fernández, *La vida es un special*; (2) in Ana Menéndez's use of reader response and archival research methods to critically recast a history of family division under the Cuban Revolution as popular romance fiction in *Loving Che*; and (3) in the only novel Antonio Benítez Rojo lived to write in the United States, *Mujer en traje de batalla* (about the accidental arrival in New York City of the cross-dressing "first female Cuban physician" Enriqueta Faber, 1791-1827). Departing from the methodology presented with the narrative structure of each of the novels, in which a diagetic process of a character's reading and/or writing Cuban history from a site of exile is countered by extradiagetic documentary and metaliterary information, I examine each novel's metacritical approach to the politics of exile and diaspora historiography, as well as toward Cuban, Caribbean, Latin American, and/or U.S. literary textual economies. How does each novel position itself politically, aesthetically, and cognitively with respect to the way Cuban history is and has been archived, particularly from away from the island?

The main theoretical framework underlying these analyses is Michel Foucault's concept of the Archive as (1) an a priori "system that governs the appearance of

statements and unique events" (129) and (2) as "the density of discursive practices, systems that establish statements as events […] and things" (131). The three critical theoretical models of historical fiction that have proven the most useful for the analytical project of this dissertation are Roberto González Echevarría's theory of archival fiction, Linda Hutcheon's concept of historiographic metafiction, and César A. Salgado's paradigm of subaltern archival politics. For González Echevarría in *Myth and Archive: A Theory of Latin American Narrative*, the Latin American novel imitates archival practices, inviting a critical examination of processes of exclusion inherent in Archival politics through the "grab-bag approach to history" of archival fiction (34). For Hutcheon, metacritical historical fiction stages the rhetoric of legitimation constitutive to historical discourses as "meaning-making […] human constructs" (89) by framing historical source material in unusual fictional contexts (87-123). For Salgado, the subaltern historical novel brings into question hierarchies of authenticity inscribed in imperialist archives as truth-producing machines, often through the gesture of discovering a hidden, lost, or suppressed document that contradicts official versions of history (162-65). My use of the term *archival dissonances* refers to the jarring clashes between cognitive and ideological systems, according to which documentary sources are considered significant, arranged, and interpreted to produce historical knowledge, as they are staged in the Cuban post-exile historical novel.

Finally, Seymour Menton's *Latin America's New Historical Novel* (1993) has served as a useful point of reference for the distinction between a traditional Latin

American historical novel (1826-1949) and a more recent, revisionist, and "dialogic" (20) body of historical fiction (15-20). The further delimiting criterion that Menton applies to define historical fiction –i.e., that the narrated action must take place in a past time frame preceding the author's lifetime (16)—is acknowledged by the critic to be an "arbitrary" device for narrowing the scope of his survey work (16) and will not be of concern for this dissertation.

1.1 Justification of Works Analyzed

My selection of Fernández's, Menéndez's, and Benítez Rojo's novels for analysis in this dissertation resulted from my research on the emergence of U.S. Cuban narrative fiction as a subcategory of Caribbean (De la Nuez 129, Fowler 130-31, Strausfeld 9-13) and Latin American (Figueredo 27) literatures rather than as an ethnic subcategory of U.S. literature (Burunat and García 11-15, Poey and Suárez 12-15). During the first part of my research, I examined work dating back to the first generation of anti-Castro exile novels and short stories in the 1960s. My goal was to observe continuities and points of divergence in the diachronic development of mostly Spanish-language historical fiction produced in the United States by writers of Cuban origin, focusing on possible intertextual connections with Latin American and Caribbean historical fiction. The works surveyed that demonstrated such connections include *Los cruzados de la aurora*

(1972) by José Sánchez-Boudy; *Los fundadores: Alfonso y otros cuentos* (1973) by Lourdes Casal; *Segar a los muertos* (1980) by Matías Montes Huidobro; *Otra vez el mar* (1982) by Reinaldo Arenas; *La vida es un special ~~$1.50~~ .75* (1981), *La montaña rusa* (1983), and *Raining Backwards* (1988) by Roberto G. Fernández; *Del rojo de su sombra* (1992), *Tú, la oscuridad* (1995), and *Como un mensajero tuyo* (1999) by Mayra Montero; *Mujer en traje de batalla* (2001) by Antonio Benítez Rojo; and *Loving Che* (2004) by Ana Menéndez.

It became clear that this literature did not constitute a coherent canon. For example, Casal, Fernández, Benítez Rojo, and Menéndez produced works that call into question the construct of a unified, communitarian U.S. Cuban exile. Sánchez-Boudy's and Arenas's work reinforced Cuban exile ethnic tropes of protest against the Cuban government and of lamentation and alienation in the United States. Montero's work ignored the idea of political exile altogether, focusing instead on shared histories of and migrations between Cuba, Haiti, the Dominican Republic, and Puerto Rico.

What the texts held in common was that they represented, sui generis, analytical narrative fiction by writers who were professors either of Latin American and Caribbean literatures (Sánchez-Boudy, Montes Huidobro, Fernández, and Benítez Rojo) or social psychology (Casal), journalists (Montero and Menéndez), and professional writers from socialist Cuba (Arenas and Benítez Rojo). They were also produced in sites away from the Miami Cuban exile community. Given this sort of eccentric and dissonant imaginative cohort, I determined to focus on Fernández's, Menéndez's, and Benítez

Rojo's novels, which present paradigmatic examples of works that probe, elude, and/or suspend consonance with communitarian tropes of Cuban exile discourses of national and ethnic history. The selection of works by a first-generation émigré writer (Benítez Rojo), a one-and-a-half-generation writer (Fernández), and a second-generation, American-born Cuban or "Cuban-bred American" writer (Menéndez) additionally affords an opportunity to test prevalent models of U.S. Cuban literary criticism that are based on generational categories (Alvarez-Borland, *Cuban-American Literature*; Burunat and García, Herrera, Luis 148-234; Pérez Firmat, *Life on the Hyphen*; Poey and Suárez).

La vida es un special explores dissonances between the Archive of the U.S. Cuban exile as a unified moral community, defined by the Catholic and anti-Communist politics of the first generation of U.S. Cuban émigrés who arrived in Miami after the 1959 revolution (Portes and Stepick 142-47; Rieff 119), Fernando Ortiz's theory of transculturation; and the novel's phantasmagoric "counter-Archive" of the sugar plantation and U.S. military intervention. *Loving Che* stages archival dissonance between "great man," "great villain," pluralistic, and materialist frames for the production of historiography surrounding the Cuban Revolution, as well as from the fundamental clash between the Archives of family and nation. The archival dissonance in *Mujer en traje de batalla* derives from the counterpoint the novel posits between the epistemological frames of migrant historiography and "creolization" that organize the diagetic testimonial history written by Benítez Rojo's fictional Enriqueta Faber and the masculinist Archive of nationhood that organizes the actual historiography produced surrounding her.

1.2 Methodology Statement

The goal of each chapter was to perform a detailed analysis of the archival dissonances sustained throughout the novel with regard to the work's context, individual narrative logic, aesthetic and hermeneutic framing, and historical focus. I began my analysis with a close reading of each novel in order to identify framing narratives, formal structure, and references to or citation of historical discourses and archival documents within the works. I located and examined historical source materials cited or implied in the novels. These ranged from social notices in newspapers to published letters to secondary works of history. I compared the documentary and historical materials, first, to their fictional contexts within the overall narrative architecture of the novels and, second, as a counter-archival documentary cluster or dossier. Finally, I conducted further close readings in order to analyze the novels' metacritical statement on the question governing each analysis: how is Cuban history portrayed to be written from the position of the U.S. Cuban exile?

During the remainder of this introduction, I will present a review of the theories and bibliography of Cuban exile literature focusing on the historical and archival novel. I will postulate that U.S. Cuban historical fiction may be classified according to two main categories, depending on their archival figuration and their politics. The first category,

the historical novel of Cuban exile, presents documentary material as non-ironic, epic or nostalgic historical narrative. The second category of post-exile novel, in contrast, portrays Cuban and Cuban exile historiography in a metacritical way. I will argue that the Cuban *post-exile* historical novel goes in a different direction by exploring and featuring dissonances hidden or unacknowledged in previous *exile* historical fictions.

1.3 From Exile to Post-Exile in the U.S. Cuban Historical Novel

According to Pérez Firmat, exile literature constitutes a body of work defined by conservative cultural politics, as the writer "attempts […] to cement the continuity between his present and former selves by maintaining his otherness toward his new environment" (*Transcending* 2). It reinforces a "relentlessly retrospective" point of view (3) – "[f]or the exile writer, life is elsewhere, and his retrospective writing tirelessly rings the changes on the themes of alienation and return" (4)— and ideologically-motivated, nationalistic choices of literary expression: "An extreme example are the words of a well-known Cuban exile writer, who once told me that even if she had lived in the North Pole for twenty years, she would continue to write in Spanish about Cuba" (2).

Writing separately, Wolfgang Binder, Roberto G. Fernández, and Danilo Figueredo postulate two categories of post-1959 Cuban exile narrative fiction. The first is a type of historical literature of political protest against the 1959 revolution and the

policies of socialist Cuba (Binder, "American Dreams" 231-37, Férnandez, "El cuento" 12-40, Figueredo 19-20), which Binder calls "a literature of revenge, hatred, confession, and reckoning" ("American Dreams" 231). Works that fall into this category were mainly published during the 1960s and early 1970s, corresponding to the era of failed armed attempts by various Cuban exile groups to overthrow the Cuban government (Binder 231, Fernández 22-24, Figueredo 19). Representative titles include *Caminos llenos de borrascas* (1962) by Emilio Fernández Camus, *El cielo será nuestro* (1965) by Manuel Cabo Sausa, *Cuentos políticos* (1971) by Manuel Cachán, *Los unos, los otros… y el seibo* (1971) by Beltrán de Quirós, and *¿Te acuerdas de aquello, Ofi?* (1974) by Pedro Ramón López. Most of this work was produced by amateur writers of self-styled, ideologically right-wing testimonial historiography (Binder, "American Dreams" 234-37, Figueredo 19, Menton 216). Thus it features a rudimentary literary style:

> These books tend to be didactic with the narrator interrupting the flow of the story to editorialize on the perceived evils of Communism in general, and Castro in particular. Characters are not developed; the protagonists are all good, and the Castristas are the villains. Knowledge of Cuban history is a must in order to understand the incidents depicted. (Figueredo 19)

Such work as *Segar a los muertos* (1980) by Matías Montes Huidobro, an avant-garde historical novel narrating the phantasmagoric conversion of Havana into an extended graveyard and underworld, serves as both an exception to the time frame usually

associated with exile literature of political protest (the 1960s and early 1970s), and an anomaly among anti-Castro exile literature for its aesthetic interest.

The second category of Cuban exile literature cited by Binder, Fernández, and Figueredo is characterized by nostalgia for what Binder calls "the good times ('tiempos lindos') of life in [Republican] Cuba" ("American Dreams" 237) and by a correlated sentimental portrayal of Cuban folkways in exile (Binder, "American Dreams" 237-46, Fernández, "El cuento" 56-86, Figueredo 19-20). Representative works include *Las pirañas y otros cuentos cubanos* (1972) by Asela Gutiérrez Kann, *La más fermosa: leyendas cubanas* (1975) by Concepción Teresa Alzola, *El vuelo de una golondrina: narraciones de un exiliado* (1983) by Rafael Ferrer Luque, *Cuentos blancos y negros* (1983) by José Sánchez-Boudy, and *The Mambo Kings Play Songs of Love* (1989) by Oscar Hijuelos. Nostalgic exile literature is rooted in revisionist, conservative discourses of Cuban exile historiography, although less conspicuously so than in the overtly political works of anti-revolutionary protest. For example, Binder writes, regarding Sánchez-Boudy's *Lilayando, pal tú: mojito y picardía cubana: antinovela* (1978), that the satirical, bilingual banter between the text's stereotypical Afro-Cuban buffoons serves as "a social corrective" for the purpose of preserving authentic Cuban nationality in the midst of the tragic historical error of exile:

> [H]is use in dialogues of Cuban types as we find them in Cuban literature since the 1840s […] heightens the pungency of his messages. He, like all other authors mentioned so far, is –at least culturally—a nationalist, who

> sees Cuban coherence endangered on the mainland. [….] Being bilingual comes close to being a traitor […]. ("American Dreams" 243)

In his dissertation Fernández censures writers in the nostalgic vein of exile literature for distorting the socioeconomic and political facts of Republican Cuban history ("El cuento" 60-62). For example, he criticizes Gutiérrez Kann's fiction for using as setting an idyllic imaginary, microcosmic Cuban town called Casalba, during an undefined period between the 1910s and the Revolution of 1933. According to historian Louis A. Pérez, Jr., in contrast to Gutiérrez Kann's utopian Casalba, corruption was pervasive throughout Cuban government during this period of time:

> During the administrations of José Miguel Gómez (1908-12) and Mario G. Menocal (1912-20), a total of some 372 indictments were brought against public officials, dealing with a wide range of offenses, including embezzlement, fraud, homicide […] misappropriation of funds, and violation of electoral laws. By 1923, the number of indictments had increased to 483. But […] even when convictions were obtained, sentences were rarely served. (*Cuba* 217)

Problems of the 1910-1933 era included, moreover, the penetration of foreign capital – including through bribery for the acquisition of local assets— (*Cuba* 217), systemic racial discrimination against Afro-Cubans (221), U.S. armed interventions (223), "severe economic dislocation" (224) caused by the dependence of the Cuban economy on the monoculture of sugar (224-28), and, finally, military dictatorship (256-62). Fernández

concludes his criticism by condemning the intellectual dishonesty of nostalgic exile literature of which he finds Gutiérrez Kann's anodyne version of early twentieth-century Cuban community representative:

> La nostalgia expresada […] a través de estas narraciones toma el aspecto de lo que podríamos calificar de nostalgia por una sociedad que ella percibe como […] utópica; donde la armonía era el orden imperante. O sea en su afán nostálgico peca en atribuirle esta visión a la sociedad cubana. En este paraíso perdido no había políticos ni sociales. Los pocos pobres que se presentan parecen haber estado muy a gusto con su "status quo". Es irónico que esta época dorada de Casalba ocurriera durante o después del régimen de Menocal, tiempo en que comienzan las turbulencias políticas y el decenso económico. La nostalgia evoca el recuerdo pero no debe tergiversarlo hasta convertirlo en algo que no fue […]. ("El cuento" 76)

During the late 1980s, Carolina Hospital and Gustavo Pérez Firmat, working separately, developed critical models of Cuban American literature based on the principle of generational succession in order to account for and encourage the emergence of a post-exile U.S. Cuban literary aesthetic (Hospital, "Los hijos" 112-13, Pérez Firmat, *Life* 7-11, *Transcending* 9-12). Hospital's paradigm posits an Oedipal relationship between two generations of U.S. Cuban literature: exile and "the sons and daughters of exile" ("los hijos del exilio"). The literary production of first-generation, post-Revolution Cuban

exile writers, i.e., U.S. Cuban exile literature of the 1960s and 1970s, is described according to the traits of Latin American and Spanish exile literature presented by Julio Ortega in "La escritura del exilio" (1978), Andrés Avellaneda in "Exilio y literatura latinoamericana" (1981), and Paul Ilie in *Literature and Inner Exile: Authoritarian Spain, 1939-1975* (1980). Hospital refers to Ortega to discuss "el discurso de la derrota; la valoración del cuerpo y del habla de los sentidos como forma de crítica a la violencia; el análisis de una conciencia del destierro y la búsqueda de formas culturales populares, festivas y auto-suficientes" (105). She cites Avellaneda to describe the dichotomous view of first-generation exile literature (e.g., the tendency to assert contrasts between "here" and "there," "now" and "before") and Ilie to approach the themes of displacement and alienation (105). For Hospital, the succeeding generation, the "sons and daughters of exile" ("los hijos del exilio"), includes roughly the cohort of U.S. Cuban writers born after 1949 (103). She writes that their work struggles experimentally to negotiate the transition from "exile consciousness" toward a new bilingual, bicultural consciousness and identity:

> Aunque los escritores cubano-americanos comienzan a utilizar el inglés mucho más y aunque se enfrentan a nuevos problemas sociales y culturales en el presente que forjan una nueva identidad, todavía se percibe una voz, conciente o subconciente, en el destierro. Los textos de estos escritores reflejan la búsqueda de formas, imágenes y temas que permitan crear esta nueva experiencia dentro de dos culturas. (113)

Based on this premise, Hospital compiled the anthology *Los Atrevidos: Cuban American Writers* (1989) which Nicolás Kanellos identifies as "the first anthology of Cuban American literature […] thus announcing the birth and acceptance of Cuban American literature as other than a literature of exile and immigration" (108). In spite of the simplicity of Hospital's generational model of a post-exile U.S. Cuban literature, Kanellos cites it as a bold breakthrough toward the establishment of Cuban American literature as an ethnic sub-category of U.S. literature:

> The prevailing political sentiment in Miami and other centers of Cuban exile had fought against the concept of a Cuban *Americanism*, since the exile community's identity depended on remaining distinctively Cuban and someday returning to their home. Hospital braved the opposition, openly embracing English and bilingualism and recognizing the birth of a literature that is firmly planted in American soil and is here to stay. (Kanellos 108-109)

In *Transcending Exile: Cuban American Literature Now* (1987), Pérez Firmat adapts the three-generation paradigm of ethnic assimilation that Werner Sollors, in *Beyond Ethnicity: Consent and Descent in American Culture* (1986), finds to be conventional in the sociological and literary discourses surrounding immigration to the United States (*Transcending* 2-5). Pérez Firmat does so to contrast the conservative attributes of first-generation exile literature –"a pronounced allergy to cultural acquisitions and […] a strong fixation on the culture of origin" (2-3), monolingual

writing in "the 'mother tongue'" (2-4), the view of exile as "a […] topographical accident" (4), and the "relentlessly retrospective" repetition of "themes of alienation and return" (4)—to typically third-generation "immigrant" writing (2-4). He summarizes immigrant writing as a literature of assimilation, citing the quality of conversion narrative (2), the displacement of "the mother tongue" by the majority target language (2), and a "prospective" outlook toward the new majority culture (3). Finally, he describes the hyphenate attributes of ethnic cultural expression as located between exile and immigration:

> Unlike immigrant and exile literature, ethnic literature is neither prospective nor retrospective. The ethnic writer is not interested in assimilation or return; indeed, his work is given over to exploring what it means to refuse both of these options. [….] Ethnicity […] consists of the non-conflictive cohabitation of dissimilar cultures. [….] The ethnic accepts that his *patria* is not, nor can ever be, his *país*. And what is more, he is not disturbed by this split. Since identity does not interest him, he does not suffer identity crises. Instead, like the amphibian, he revels in his doubleness. (4-5).

For the remainder of *Transcending Exile,* Pérez Firmat advocates the mode of "ethnic" performance as a creative strategy both more appealingly complex and more apt for the second-generation Cuban American writers to pursue. In particular, he cites the lag of U.S. Cuban literary writers behind such ethnic performers of a "Cuban-American style"

as the Miami pop musician Willie Chirino (b. 1947) and the radio programmers of WQBA FM, Miami (10-12), whose practice of "the art of the cultural oxymoron" (10) he relates the writing of Fernando Ortiz (1881-1969) on the exogenous sources of Cuban culture in his much-noted *Contrapunteo cubano del tabaco y el azúcar* (1940). First Pérez Firmat describes a musical improvisation he witnessed at a Kendall, Florida night club near a strip mall called Loehman's Plaza, that featured Chirino on keyboard and José Fajardo on flute. Describing how Chirino irreverently embroidered the improvisation, which was based on the Trío Matamoros's Cuban standard "Son de la loma" (1928), with musical references to popular music of the United States (e.g., the Regents' 1961 hit rock and roll song "Barbara Anne," covered as "Barbara Ann" by the Beach Boys in 1965 and The Who in 1966), he writes:

> Given that this musical miscegenation was taking place only a few blocks from Loehman's Plaza, in my mind the *Son de la loma* became the Song of Loehman's, and as such a moving, melodious emblem of the odd couplings that make up ethnic culture—not a "Cuban Counterpoint," as in Fernando Ortiz's famous book, but a "Cuban-American Counterpoint" (10)

He concludes by contrasting the two competing Miami radio stations WQBA AM, a monolingual Spanish-language station that featured right-wing nationalist Cuban exile talk show programming and styled itself as superlatively Cuban ("La Cubanísma"), and WQBA FM, a bilingual station that played pop music in Spanish and English and sported

the equally superlative, but English-language and, for Pérez Firmat, transcultured nickname "Super Q":

> If WQBA is the *cubanísima,* the station more Cuban than which none can be conceived, its FM twin is none other than Super-Q, Super-Cuba. […] Super-Q counters the bombast (not to mention the *bombas*) of its sister station by saying, in effect: the way to be super-Cuban is not to cling to one's roots, but to welcome transplantation: *cubanía* is not a matter of roots but of routes; what defines is not the place where we stop but the place where we step, not a land but a landing. [….] Let the Cuban-American writer take his cue from Super-Q […]. (11-12)

Pérez Firmat thus relates his call for an ethnic, *post-exile* Cuban American literature to his research on early twentieth-century Cuban Creole literature, published in *The Cuban Condition* (1989). *The Cuban Condition* analyzes, in light of the national founding gesture that *criollista* literature represents in the Latin American canon (6-14), the monographs of Fernando Ortiz, the sonnets of Nicolás Guillén (1902-1989), the collection of criollist poems (*décimas,* poems composed in stanzas of ten eight-syllable verses, "the genre of choice of Cuba's popular bards" 95) included in *Trópico* (1930) by Eugenio Florit (1903-2000), the picaresque novel *Juan Criollo* (1927) by Carlos Loveira (1882-1928), and the naturalist novel *Ciénaga* (1937) by Luis Felipe Rodríguez (1888-1947). The conclusions that Pérez Firmat reaches in *The Cuban Condition* are that, first, Cuban Creole literature is "translational rather than foundational"— i.e., the foundational

works of Cuban *criollismo* are based on critical, creative translations of foreign models (157). Second, he concludes that this phenomenon results from a historical "Cuban condition," that Pérez Firmat defines according to Ortiz's theory of transculturation: "What characterizes Cuban culture is mutability, uprootedness. [….] For this reason, transculturation, a coinage that denotes transition, passage, process, is the best name for the Cuban condition" (23). This interpretation is based on the second chapter of *Contrapunteo cubano* ("Del fenómeno social de la 'transculturación'" 254-60), as well as on Ortiz's image of Cuban culture as a sort of improvised stew (*ajiaco*) composed of exogenous "ingredients" in the essay "Los factores humanos de la cubanidad" (1940). Pérez Firmat concludes:

> Knowing that in Cuba transience precedes essence, these writers take their distance from the foundational gestures typical of the [Latin American] criollist program. Cuban criollism is rootless, unearthly, movable—translational rather than foundational. Which engenders another paradox: in Cuba, nativist literature shades into its opposite, the literature of exile. (157)

In this way, he suggests a cognitive approach to *post-exile* historicity that is organized by the "archive" –in Foucault's theoretical sense of the Archive as a cognitive system or imaginary determining conceivable range of enunciations, as well as the order of such enunciations (129)—of transculturation.

Pérez Firmat's most cited work with regard to Cuban American literature, *Life on the Hyphen: the Cuban-American Way* (1994), in part suggests a similar cognitive connection between U.S. Cuban historicity and an "archive" of transculturation:

> As […] Fernando Ortiz pointed out many years ago, Cuba is a land of migratory birds, *aves de paso.* Ortiz's famous metaphor for Cuba was that of the *ajiaco*—an indefinitely renewable stew that accepts the most diverse ingredients. [….] There are no pure people in Cuba […]. Cubans have always been hyphenated Americans. [….] *Life on the Hyphen* could also have been the title of a book about the Cuban condition. (15-16)

However, the framework developed in *Life on the Hyphen* does not aim to historicize U.S. Cuban cultural production according to such an "archive"—e.g., in light of the problematic shared history of two-way migrations between the United States in Cuba, forming the basis for what Louis A. Pérez, Jr. calls "binding familiarities" (*On Becoming* 28), or in terms of the differences between "waves" of post-Revolution emigration from Cuba to the United States between 1959 and 1994 (e.g., Boswell and Curtis, Pedraza). Rather, *Life on the Hyphen* personifies the "art of the cultural oxymoron" in the second, or more precisely, the "one-and-a-half" generation of U.S. Cuban émigrés (7). A borrowed term from sociologist Rubén Rumbaut (*Life* 4), the "one-and-a-half" generation refers to "an intermediate immigrant generation whose members spent their childhood or adolescence abroad but grew into adults in America" (4). Cuban American culture is thus defined as the ephemeral, intermediate stage of "an immigrant group" on the way to

"expiration" through full assimilation to majority U.S. culture, putatively following the demise of the "one-and-a-half" generation (17). It is framed as a sort of postmodern "hybrid 'nowhere' whose spiritual center is materialistic Miami" (12). Thus, in contrast to the models of post-exile Cuban literature presented in *Transcending Exile* and *The Cuban Condition, Life on the Hyphen* is of limited use in approaching critically the archival explorations of Cuban and Cuban exile historiography that is constitutive to much U.S. Cuban post-exile narrative fiction.

Examples of these explorations of a post-exile archive of transculturation include the writing of Roberto G. Fernández, a member of the "one-and-a-half" generation who is cited in *Life on the Hyphen* for his interlingual, *angloespañol* "inspired gibberish" (144), the work produced by Antonio Benítez Rojo in the United States during the 1990s and 2000s, and the narrative fiction of Ana Menéndez, a member of the younger generation of writers for whom Cuba was supposed to become "as ethereal as the smoke and as persistent as the smell of their grandfather's cigars" (Pérez Firmat, *Life* 5). Other Cuban post-exile writers who have produced investigative historical fiction include Lourdes Casal (1938-1981), Matías Montes Huidobro (b. 1931), Mayra Montero (b. 1952), and Achy Obejas (b. 1956). At the same time, Cuban exile literature continues to be produced, in Spanish and English, in both the format of political protest and in that of ahistorical, idealistic nostalgia. For example, the stated purpose of the short-story anthology *Narrativa y libertad: cuentos cubanos de la diáspora* (1996) is propagandistic: "utilizar la ficción narrative como arma de combate para atacar el opresor que los arrojó

de su tierra y luchar contra el sistema e ideología que lo sustentan en el poder" (Hernández-Miyares 13). The persistence of the nostalgic tendency of exile literature is evident in such work as *City of a Hundred Fires* (1998) by the Miami poet Richard Blanco (b. 1960). Although Blanco only lived in Cuba as an infant, nostalgic clichés of the island pervade his writing. In "Havanasis," for example, he writes:

> In the beginning, before God created Cuba, the earth was chaos, empty of form and without music. The spirit of God stirred over the dark tropical waters and God said, "Let there be music." And a soft conga began a one-two beat in the background of the chaos. [….] Then God said, "Let the earth sprout *papaya* and *coco* and white *coco* flesh; *malanga* roots and mangos in all shades of gold and amber; let there be *tabaco* and *café* and sugar for the *café;* let there be rum; let there be waving plantains and *guayabas* and everything tropical-like." God saw that this was good, then fashioned palm trees—His pièce de resistance. (37)

Such recent work supports Fernández's conclusion in 1977 that there is not so much a correlation between the choice of an author of Cuban origin to write from a post-exile perspective and his or her generation as between that choice and that person's distance from Miami: "Si las generaciones no están ligadas a la temática, la ubicación geográfica del autor, lejos de la metrópolis cubana del exilio, Miami, sí parece señalar que existe una tendencia hacia la temática universalista entre estos autores" ("El cuento" 154).

The main thesis of this dissertation is that the emergence of a post-exile U.S. Cuban fiction may in part be accounted for by a certain set of attitudinal approaches to the way Cuban history is and has been written, particularly from outside the island. These attitudes include anxiety over the preservation of Cuba's national sovereignty, including against the threat of encroachment by Cuban exile groups; investigative interest in the anomalous facts behind national and ethnic history against *a priori* nationalistic archives; and support for the protection and furtherance of postcolonial advances in Cuba, including those advocated during the socialist revolution. Another attitude includes the awareness of the give-and-take relationship between literature and history on and off the island.

1.4 Historiography in the Development of U.S. Cuban Literature

Writers of Cuban origin living in North America have published work either commenting on or intended to contribute to Cuban historiography dating back to the eighteenth century (Hospital and Cantera 2-4; Leal xxxiv-xxxv). Examples of writers who provided founding works of literature and archival documentation from Cuba's colonial period include Pedro Agustín Morell de Santa Cruz (1694-1768), José Antonio Echeverría (1815-1885), and José Martí (1853-1895). Morell, as the bishop of Havana, was sent to exile in Saint Augustine, Florida when British forces occupied the island in

1762. He took with him a collection of documents gathered from the archives of the Cathedral of Cuba in Santiago, including the manuscript of *Espejo de paciencia* (1608), the epic poem by Silvestre de Balboa. From these sources Morell compiled the chronicle *Historia de la Isla y Catedral de Cuba* in Saint Augustine (Hospital and Cantera 3; Matusalén 94-95). The chronicle was discovered in Havana by José Antonio Echeverría, a Cuban romantic poet and member of the early nineteenth-century generation of Creole intellectuals. Echeverría promoted the cause of writing national Cuban history as a member of the Comisión de Historia de la Sociedad Patriótica and as the editor of *El Plantel*, an educational magazine focused on the natural sciences, literature, and art of Cuba and the Americas. Echeverría published fragments of *Espejo de la paciencia* in *El Plantel* in 1838, framing it as "a myth about the national origin" in an article titled "Historiadores de Cuba" (Echevarría, *Celestina's Brood* 133). González Echevarría writes of the relationship between the affirmation of foundational literature and the advancement of a "concept of nationality" in the rhetoric of Echeverría and his group:

> Like [Domingo] del Monte and his coterie, Echeverría was […] eager to found a national literature, conceived in accordance with the romantic ideology that inspired the group, and, as part of a larger project, to establish the foundations for a concept of nationality. Language, literature, history, and nature were the raw materials to be used in this foundation: a people has a language and fables of its own, and is the

> product of a specific natural environment, or an evolutionary process (*Celestina´s* 134-35).

From exile in New York City (1880-1895), Martí produced a sizeable body of texts –including poetry, essays, journalistic articles, and speeches, which are recognized as foundational works of Cuban national literature as well as founding documents of Cuban independence. His rhetoric in and of itself constituted a sort of archive of Cuban independence history, organizing and making coherent rhetorical sense of an array of political agendas and discourses leading up to the last war of Cuban independence against Spain (1895-1898). As Louis Pérez affirms:

> Outside a commonly if loosely shared notion that *Cuba Libre* involved minimally separation from Spain, the final structure of free Cuba remained vaguely and incompletely defined by various sectors of the separatist movement. Martí took the first tentative steps toward giving ideological substance and political form to *Cuba Libre.* [….] His revolutionary formula was a conglomeration of national pride, social theory, anti-imperialism, and personal intuition. He rationalized it all into a single revolutionary metaphysic and institutionalized it into a single revolutionary party. (147)

During Cuba's Republican period (1901-1959), Cuban historiography thrived on the island with the development of the National Archive, founded in 1906, the establishment of numerous libraries and archival collections, and the founding of two

major professional organizations, the Academia de la Historia de Cuba –established in 1910— and the Sociedad Cubana de Estudios Históricos e Internacionales –established in 1940, with a revisionist, anti-imperialist mission, producing such historical works as *Cuba no debe su independencia a los Estados Unidos* (1950) by Emilio Roig de Leuchsenring (Smith 49-56). According to historian Robert Freeman Smith, the National Archive became "one of the best [archives] in Latin America," in large part due to director Joaquín Llaveras's ambitious publishing program:

> Under his guidance the *Boletín del Archivo Nacional* –the oldest archival review of any Latin American country which has been in continuous publication—developed into an important publication vehicle for source material. In 1912 Llaverías published his *Historia de los archivos de Cuba*. This was the first full length account of a Latin American archives, and is still a classic in the field. In addition, Llaverías edited a number of documentary collections and guides to archival holdings in Cuba and Spain. (Smith 52)

In spite of the Cuban exile presence in Miami during the Republican period, beginning during the 1930s "first as opponents of the Gerardo Machado government and subsequently as members of the fallen Machado government" (Pérez, *On Becoming* 433), and in spite of the Miami Cuban population growing over a series of cycles of migration, "after the elections of 1940, 1944, and 1948, and especially during the years following Batista's coup in 1952" (434), there is a lack of information regarding any significant

U.S. exile literary activity during the time of the Republic. However, the research activity of the eminent writer Alejo Carpentier (1904-1980) during his 1939-45 residence in Havana, particularly during his research for the Mexican publishing house Tierra Firma-commissioned history of Cuban music, *La música en Cuba* (1946), is suggestive of the symbiotic relation of influence between the fields of literature and history:

> Carpentier was forced to recover […] history from old chronicles, compendia, forgotten manuscripts and papers […]. Carpentier also returned to Bartolomé de las Casas' *Historia de las Indias,* Fernández de Oviedo's *Historia general y natural de las Indias Occidentales,* Bernal Díaz's *Verdadera historia.* He also read the two colonial Cuban chronicles: Morell de Santa Cruz's *Historia de la Isla y Catedral de Cuba* and de Arrates's *Llave del Nuevo Mundo.* He pored over more recent works such as […] Roig de Leuchsenring's *Historia de la Habana,* not to mention the work of Ramiro Guerra and Fernando Ortiz. [….] It would be difficult to exaggerate the importance of all this research in Carpentier's fiction. (González Echevarría, *Alejo Carpentier* 102)

Carpentier was, of course, the author of the seminal historical novels *El reino de este mundo* (1949), *El siglo de las luces* (1962), *El recurso del método* (1974), and *El arpa y la sombra* (1980), products of this sort of intense research method, which would serve as an influential model for the three works to be analyzed in this dissertation.

Seymour Menton writes about the boom of Cuban exile literature after the Cuban Revolution written by mostly amateur authors –e.g., "lawyers, teachers, and newspapermen, several of whom hold doctorates […] in civil law" (*Prose Fiction* 216)—with the purpose of inventing an epic exile history of the time period from the end of the military dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista (1952-1958) through the failed coup attempt of the Bay of Pigs invasion (1961) (221-25). This revisionist historical literature of protest against the Cuban Revolution, first, is meant to delegitimize the 1959 Cuban Revolution and socialist Cuba, and, second, reinforces the social construction of the Cuban exile as a monolithic "moral community," to use Alejandro Portes and Alex Stepick's term (37).

Caminos llenos de borrascas (1962) by Emilio Fernández Camus provides an example of a Cuban exile novel of protest performing the function of a testimonial historical document at the same time that it presents made-up documentary "proof" of undocumented, revisionist distortions regarding the Batista and Castro governments. First, the novel "proves" the existence of a monolithic, global Communist conspiracy that is supposed to have been responsible for the Cuban Revolution. It narrates the downfall of an Italian-American family after the wayward son Mario agrees before Christopher Preston, "the head of the entire Communist movement in Latin America" (34), to join the Cuban guerrillas in the Sierra Maestra during the first months of the Cuban revolution. Mario becomes Fidel Castro's handler, transmitting Soviet orders by way of Preston in Mexico. Mario is killed by members of the anti-revolutionary Cuban exile paramilitary group Brigada 2506 during the ill-fated Bay of Pigs invasion. The documentary "proof"

in favor of the Batista regime and against the Revolution is presented during the scene of epic descent to the underworld in which Mario's childhood friend Miguel is secreted in a wizened *guajiro*'s hut during the search for the deceased Mario.

First, the *guajiro* and his son lecture Miguel about how the vanquished Batista military dictatorship was the real advocate of the working Cuban, on account of its development of rural infrastructure in favor of agricultural business. They complain about the socialist Cuban agrarian reforms, which they see as a transparent strategy by the international Communist conspiracy to tempt other Latin American nations with a false promise of social justice and then devour them (131). Finally, after a lengthy discourse on such topics as the inefficiency of Russian and Chinese techniques of agricultural production and the circulation of fiat money –e.g., "La circulación fiduciaria ha aumentado hasta límites extraordinarios, que hacen pensar en las dificultades que tendrán los gobiernos posteriores para estabilizar la moneda" (131)—the *guajiros* show Miguel a pamphlet ("un folleto") that proves the superior "economic and social state of Cuba before the Revolution" (134).

According to Menton, the peak period of production for Cuban exile literature of political protest in the epic mode is between 1965 and 1972 (*Prose Fiction* 307-308). This time frame corresponds to a key moment of demographic diversification among U.S. Cuban émigré communities. From September 1965 to April 1973, the Castro, Johnson, and Nixon administrations agreed to allow Cubans with relatives in the United States to resume legal migration, with the U.S. government subsidizing one-way air travel from

Varadero to Miami. Boswell and Curtis call attention to the increasingly working-class makeup of that wave of emigration, which is known as the Varadero Airlift or Puente áereo Varadero-Miami: "the migration stream was maturing, so the immigrants were beginning to approach the occupational characteristics of the labor force in Cuba" (Boswell and Curtis 49). Cubans who had struggled to make a living on the island and who would continue to do so in the United States began to arrive in greater proportions: "the percentage of arriving refugees who were working in Cuba as professional and managerial employees declined from 31 percent in 1962 to 18 percent in 1967" (Boswell and Curtis 49). In sum, the 1965-72 period is marked by a trend toward Cuban migration to the United States as an economic act as much as a political one (Amaro and Portes 13, Boswell and Curtis 51, Hernández 58). Portes and Stepick write about the consolidation of a "monolithic political outlook" and the reproduction of "the social pecking order of pre-Revolutionary Cuba" in Cuban Miami during this period of increasing socioeconomic diversity:

> [T]he exile community featured a monolithic political outlook, sustained both by conviction and the silencing of dissidents and by a rapidly improving economic situation. The staggered pattern of refugee migration had contributed to the latter state by furnishing Cuban firms with growing markets and reliable labor pools at opportune moments. Unwittingly, the successive waves of refugee migration reproduced in Miami the social pecking order of pre-Revolutionary Cuba […]. (147)

The anti-revolutionary Cuban exile fiction of 1965-1972 contributed to the mythology of the so-called Golden Exile, which defined the U.S. Cuban exile in terms of the earliest wave of emigration following the Revolution (1959-1962): "This refers to the belief that the vast majority [of Cuban exiles] were members of the elite classes in Cuba" (Boswell and Curtis 45). Menton lists the following distinctive social traits of this anti-revolutionary Cuban exile fiction: the exaggeratedly epic portrayal of upper- and middle-class Cuban exile families' and individuals' resistance to the 1959 revolution, socialist Cuba, and internationalist Communism –Cuban exile Catholic "family values" especially serving as a foil for the state-centered values of "godless" Communism—(221); a racist social outlook (222-23); and an elitist view of Cuban exiles as a group of people set apart within the environment of the United States, above other minority groups and above mainstream U.S. culture, which is portrayed as dehumanized, materialistic, and generally amoral (225).

Since the 1970s, U.S. Cuban writers have begun to publish narrative fiction that critically explores sources of scholarly Cuban historiography and political discourses underlying versions of Cuban national history produced in exile as well as on the island. The 1972 short story "Los fundadores: Alfonso," by the New York City-based Afro-Cuban, African-American, and lesbian writer and sociologist Lourdes Casal (1938-1981) represents an early example of such post-exile metacritical work (Casal, *Los fundadores* 19-30).

"Los fundadores" densely arranges, over the text's eleven pages, archival data on the immigration of Chinese contract laborers to New Spain (20-21, 25); the development of free black populations in western Cuba (24); nineteenth-century Chinese revolutionary history (25); participation by Afro-Cuban, Chinese, and indigenous Caribbean soldiers in the Cuban wars of independence from Spain (23, 25); and the demographic fluidity of Havana's ethnic enclaves during the 1930s (28-30). The complex, disparate nature of the story's documentary sources is reinforced by the fragmentary structure of the work. "Los fundadores" arranges a dissonant, asymmetrical counterpoint between three narrative threads –*La biznieta* ("The Great-Granddaughter") 1-3, *Alfonso* 1-6, and *Historia* ("History") 1-4— alternating between first-person, second-person (*tú*), and third-person-omniscient narrative voices, respectively.

The story traces the great-granddaughter's genealogy back three generations –to the generation preceding that of her Sino-Cuban great-grandfather, Alfonso López— with the idea that the great-granddaughter, as well as each of her ancestors, represents a site of clashing diasporas, each of which implies, in turn, further, vertiginously complex chains of migratory histories. In its reference to divergent archival sources and the chaotic, discontinuous structure of the text,"Los fundadores" subverts the principle of los fundadores" as founding fathers. The story thus frames Cuban culture in the terms of roots historically from outside the island. It recalls the fundamental value Ortiz attaches to migration in *Contrapunteo cubano*:

> No hubo factores humanos más trascendentes para la cubanidad que esas continuas, radicales y contrastantes transmigraciones geográficas, económicas, sociales de los pobladores; que esa perenne transitoriedad de los propósitos y que esa vida siempre en desarraigo de la tierra habitada, siempre en desajuste con la sociedad sustentadora. Hombres, economías, culturas y anhelos, todo aquí se sintió foráneo, provisional, cambiadizo, "aves de paso" sobre el país, a su costa, a su contra y a su malgrado. (258)

Seemingly improvising on the theme of Ortiz's 1940 essay, Casal's short story anticipates the methodology of archival dissonance and poetics of transculturation in later post-exile writers like Fernández, Benítez Rojo, and Menéndez. It also anticipates Pérez Firmat's *Transcending Exile* by fifteen years. It is further worth noting Casal's fiction in the contexts of her work as a sociologist, investigating questions of class and race both in socialist Cuba (e.g., *Revolution, The Role*) and in U.S. exile communities (e.g., Prohías and Casal); as a participant in the late-1970s dialogues between Cuban émigrés and Cubans on the island; and in her capacity as co-founder and co-editor of the journal *Areíto.*

Areíto was established in 1974 with the stated purpose of investigating "Cuban reality," including the exploration of the Cuban Revolution on its own terms (Grupo Areíto, "Editorial" 1). Contributors of articles, interviews, and creative works during the first two years of the journal included Marifeli Pérez-Stable (another co-founder and co-editor), María Cristina-Herrera, González Echevarría, Fernández, José Kozer, Lisandro

Pérez, and Dolores Prida. By the third year of publication (1976), the journal's editors had articulated a broader policy for accepting manuscripts, and contributors would come to include such writers as Néstor García Canclini, Paul Laraque, and Benítez Rojo. The scope of *Areíto* grew beyond "la publicación de artículos sobre temáticas cubanas referentes tanto al proceso revolucionario y sus orígenes como a los grupos de emigrados" to include the fields of Latin American studies and U.S. minority issues: "Igualmente buscamos publicaciones sobre la problemática latinoamericana y la de los grupos minoritarios en Estados Unidos en general" ("Aceptación de manuscritos" 1). In 1978, members of the Areíto Group published their own collective testimonial document, *Contra viento y marea*, which forcefully contested the epic mythology of a putatively unified U.S. Cuban exile community. In sum, the journal represents an important site of critical sociological, historical, and literary inquiry in the formation of a *post-exile* aesthetic. The Areíto Group can thus be considered a matrix and, to some extent, a launching pad for a new, metacritical U.S. Cuban historical novel.

Such a Cuban *post-exile* historical novel is distinct, in its archival figurations and politics, from the non-ironic, epic or nostalgic Cuban exile historical novel. As a type of postmodernist "metahistoriographic fiction," to use Linda Hutcheon's terminology, it stages the rhetoric of "[h]istorical statements, be they in historiography or realist fiction" in view of the "grammatical reference to the discursive situation of the utterance (producer, receiver, context, intent)" (Hutcheon 91). As work participating in a subaltern

archival politics, it sheds light on the relationships between power, archival authority, and documentary control (Salgado 162-65).

Content

Chapter Two begins with an overview of Fernández's novels, which also include *La montaña rusa* (1983), *Raining Backwards* (1988), and *Holy Radishes!* (1995), with attention to the vignette structure in the novels as a technology for the works' staging of investigative hermeneutics and a metacritical archive. Analysis of *La vida es un special* begins with an overview of the novel's phantasmagoric, dystopian history of South Florida, which is set in the near future and presented by a Cuban exile historian in a distant future frame. The oneiric, dystopian South Florida regime that the vignettes document is the result of a U.S. military intervention in support of a monarchy that rules over the region's complex of sugar plantations and factories. The chapter examines the development of a poetics of transculturation as an alternative social order to the South Floridian sugar aristocracy in the syncretization of U.S. folklore, Caribbean cultural performance, and the establishment of a decentralized religious cult. Revisionist works of 1940s-generation Cuban independence history and the more recent sociological research on U.S.-Cuban migrations are arranged as subtexts in dissonance with the nationalistic, classist, and racist teleology asserted by the organizing aristocratic Cuban exile historian. On a metacritical level, the validation of the Cuban Revolution in light of

Cuban independence history is examined within the narrative logic of the novel and in the literary production of the Areíto Group of Cuban American intellectuals in the 1970s and 80s. Fernández's critical writing on Cuban exile literature, while studying to become a professor of Latin American and Caribbean literatures, and corresponding to the period of his collaboration with *Areíto*, is examined. The portrayal of language, racism, and what constitutes legitimate history in *La vida* is analyzed as a corrective parody of José Sánchez-Boudy's exile novel *Lilayando* and of Sánchez Boudy's dichotomous critical paradigm that categorizes Cuban exile writing either as ambitious fictions on Cuba's "historical crisis" or as criollist works of *relajo.* Finally, the chapter analyzes the archival and cognitive dissonances among Cuban exile characters who aspire to be considered among the elite social class of the dystopian, neo-colonial order of Big Sugar in the novel's oneiric version of Big Sugar society.

Chapter Three explores the clash between the gendered archives of family and nation in Menéndez's *Loving Che.* It examines parallel constructions of gender in the interposition of, first, patriarchal mediation of information and documents in Miami-Dade and, second, the fantasy of revolutionary Cuban history imagined as popular romance in the novel's central apocryphal document, a memoir about a four-year love affair with Che Guevara. The chapter then discusses the obstacles the "love child" of this affair, a second-generation Cuban exile and nameless female narrator of the novel, confronts as she attempts to recover relations with Teresa, her mother in Havana and the author of the memoir. The markings of Cuba's Special Period, which provide a dissonant archival

subtext in *Loving Che,* are examined next. Reader response and the popular romance frame are considered in light of the profitability of "great man" and "great villain"-style Cuban revolutionary history as a form of commodified nostalgia on the island, in the U.S. exile community, and in multinational business. Finally, the clashing archives and sources of biographical works on Che Guevara published on the occasion of the thirtieth anniversary of his death by Paco Ignacio Taibo II, Jon Lee Anderson, and Jorge Castañeda, among others, are explored as they are strategically attributed to discourses and characters' schemae toward approaching the history of the Cuban Revolution in the novel. These frames of interpretation are related to jarring, abstract documentary subtexts posited in the novel with regard to monumentality in Cuban exile history literature.

Chapter Four presents an analysis of the Cuban archival and historiographical appropriation of the Enriqueta Faber legend, from nineteenth-century exile historian Francisco Calcagno to twentieth-century exile historian Leví Marrero, as the overarching frame of *Mujer en traje de batalla* by Benítez Rojo. First, the novel is examined in the context of Benítez Rojo's adaptation of the mathematical theory of Chaos to his sui generis Caribbean cultural theory developed in the essay *La isla que se repite* and the other two works of his "Caribbean trilogy," *El mar de las lentejas* and *A View from the Mangrove.* The appropriation of the historical Faber's iconic image by Cuban exile historians to reinforce teleological versions of nationalistic Cuban history is related in this chapter to the fictional Faber's appropriation of a painting called *Mujer en traje de*

batalla in the novel. Both cases of specular transvestitism are viewed as dissonant with the novel's underlying principle of the stochastic logic of individual acquisition. The second half of the chapter analyzes the novel as a creative revision of the Caribbean cultural, social, and economic theory presented in *La isla* and as a metacritical distancing from similar work by Alejo Carpentier that had reinforced Cuban and Caribbean ontological exceptionality. It analyzes how the novel seems to subscribe to C.L.R. James's much-noted history of the Haitian Revolution *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution* (1963) –centered around the figure and politics of Toussaint L'Ouverture—over Carpentier's version in *El reino de este mundo*—where L'Ouverture is conspicuously absent.

Chapter Two: Cuban Revisionist Historiography and the Poetics of Transculturation in Roberto G. Fernández´s *La vida es un special ~~$1.50~~ .75*

> Patrocinado por el Bazaar 20 de Mayo [....] patrocinado por la fábrica de azúcar Ramona. (Fernández *La vida* 91)

The fiction of Roberto G. Fernández, a Cuban-American writer who has spent the majority of his career in Tallahassee, Florida, has gained wide readership and critical interest in the United States, Cuba, and Europe, especially over the last decade. The author of books in Spanish and English and professor of Hispanic and Latino literatures at Florida State University, he was born in Havana in 1950 and lived in Sagua La Grande until 1961, when he came to the United States with his parents and brother. Growing up in Vero Beach and Belle Glade, Florida, Fernández describes having been sheltered from Cuban exile politics by his parents, who "withdrew into the hinterlands or whatever, [laughs] which was good because then I could see Miami like a circus, observe it from many angles" (Fernández, "Roberto" 121-22). His novels –*La vida es un special ~~$1.50~~* (1981), *La montaña rusa* (1985), *Raining Backwards* (1988), and *Holy Radishes!* (1995)—are considered "at the vanguard of Cuban-American literature" (Alvarez-Borland 97) and "an important contribution to the development of the North American Latino voice" ("Roberto G. Fernández"). In Cuba, Fernández has "achieved recognition [...] as one of the most important Cuban writers outside of the island" and has recently

published short stories in *La Revista de la Casa de las Américas* and *La Gaceta de Cuba* (Irizarry 592). In 2006, Letras Cubanas issued an anthology of Fernández´s microfiction on the island –*Entre dos aguas*— as well. In 2002, the Real Academia Española, the Spanish Ministry of Culture, and the Instituto Cervantes invited Fernández to the Second International Congress of Spanish to speak on "the subversion of English" in *Raining Backwards* (Fernández "La subversión" 27). Critic Angela Pérez Mejía found it a moment of vindication to hear in Valladolid "one of the writers of the new generation of Latinos raised in the United States [...] push the purportedly immovable linguistic boundaries with which the north and south of the American continent are at the same time divided and in contact" ("Entre la nostalgia" 1).

2.1 Readership and Reception of Fernández's Novels

Fernández´s work is best known for the satirical and tragicomic treatment of culture clash inside and outside the Cuban exile enclaves of Miami-Dade and Belle Glade, Florida (Alvarez-Borland 103-6; Deaver "A Critical" 10; Febles Rev. 315; Irizarry 602, López Cruz 9, Smorkaloff 52-82, Vásquez 101). Critics consider the portrayal of such culture clashes in Fernández´s first three novels –*La vida es un special*, *La montaña rusa,* and *Raining Backwards*—to be particularly demanding of active readers on account of the works' sophisticated play with sociolinguistic codes, fragmentary and nonlinear vignette structures, and dense, carnivalesque textual economies. The novels require, first, fluency with a bilingual, bicultural meta-cognitive strategy that Alvarez-Borland

identifies as "interlingualism," borrowing the term from Chicana writer Marta Sánchez: "Narratives written interlingually engage rival sets of reader expectations as they graphically enact on the surface of the page the conflicts and tensions between English-speaking and Spanish speaking audiences" (Alvarez-Borland 101).

Pérez Firmat refers to this method when he hails the most egregious cases of gauche codeswitching, loan words, and calques in *Raining Backwards* as "inspired gibberish" (Pérez Firmat *Life* 144). Pérez Firmat views the macaronic humor in Fernández's fiction –e.g., "I brought also a few records: [...] Fajardo and His Stars, Congas and Carnival From the Orient, and [...] The Moor Woman From Syria by Little Barbaro X, and They Are From the Hills by the Moorkiller Trio" (Fernández *Raining* 45)—as a key point of contrast to the crossover English-language narration of Hijuelos, Suárez, and García, taking it as a double performance of cultural resistance. For Pérez Firmat, the oddly-translated English of *Raining Backwards* resists, first, the expectation that U.S. ethnic literature written in English present a narrative of cultural assimilation accessible to monolingual English-speaking readers. It also defies the ideological, nationalistic agenda of monolingual "U.S. English" inasmuch as it "proves that 'English Only' can also be 'Spanish first'" (Pérez Firmat *Life* 144). Fernández's 2002 Valladolid conference paper reinforces Pérez Firmat's interpretation, framing Fernández's work in the context of the anti-ethnic, anti-bilingual battles of the early 1980s Florida and U.S. culture wars:

> Las diferentes campañas antiétnicas florecieron con su mensaje de frenar, o si fuera posible, erradicar la creciente presencia hispana. De estas

> numerosas organizaciones, la más virulenta fue Citizens of Dade United [...]. Ésta se dedicó a [...] lograr que se promulgaran leyes que aseguraran el carácter anglosajón del condado. [....] Las campañas antibilingüismo [...] continuaron en apogeo contando con el apoyo del English Only Movement, entidad a nivel nacional. [....] En *Raining Backwards* trabajé dentro de los parámetros de la lengua inglesa pero creando tensiones lingüísticas que socavaran la estabilidad del inglés normativo. (Fernández "La subversión" 27)

Fernández's Spanish-language novels *La vida es un special* and *La montaña rusa* "graphically enact [...] conflicts and tensions between English-speaking and Spanish speaking audiences" as well, subverting normative Spanish at the service of character, plot, and thematic development. To cite an example from *La vida es un special*, a main character named Eloy de los Reyes –who is obsessed with reassembling Cuban "collective memory" from the top of his and others' heads— unconsciously lets slip the overly literal English-to-Spanish loan translation "abrir el cráneo" (i.e., "to open your mind") in an interior monologue: "[P]ara llegar a esa parte de la memoria hay que estimularla. Para eso, hay que abrir el cráneo." (Fernández *La vida* 18). Eloy's use of the Anglicism offers the reader an insight into Eloy's bad-faith Cuban roots research. With regard to plot and character development, Eloy's interlingual, internal enuncation gives the lie to his participation in the open-ended, present site of intercultural contact of his actual surrounding environment, even as he puts strenuous effort into creating hermetically-sealed, reduced ritual spaces in which to hide out, pretending to be at home

in Varadero –his bathtub— or an areito in Caney—his bedroom. (Areitos were songs that were sung about historical events, with the accompaniment of dance and drumming, by the Taino indigenous peoples of the Caribbean around the time of Columbus's arrival in 1492). With regard to the thematic development, the poorly-worded phrase "abrir el cráneo" provides a grotesquely physical image that corresponds to Eloy´s hyperbolically simplistic view of cognition –"To reach that part of the memory, one must stimulate it. For that, one must open the brain."—and preference for received knowledge:

> Por eso es mejor que me lo cuenten [...]. Además, prefiero la memoria colectiva. Es más duradera. Geología, nuerología, cirugía, sociología... siempre divago. (18)

In the scene, Eloy is acting out an obsessive-compulsive exile complex in order to create a simulacrum of Varadero Beach in his bathtub. He manically tinkers with precisely how many drops of dye to add and how many times to grind volcanic rock to reproduce the exact fineness of the Cuban sand, all the while he admonishes himself in Anglicized Spanish. The loan translation, "abrir el cráneo," reinforces the scene's mad scientist ambience. The creation of Eloy's beach is followed by an ironic moment of ominous recognition: "Luego miró el letrero sobre su playa. VARADERO PLAYA AZUL LLENA DE ILUSIONES" (18). As in a monster movie, the bathtub Varadero and bedroom Caney indeed grow out of Eloy's control, ultimately destroying his love life and embroiling him in murder and high treason, the bizarre plot details of which will be covered in the textual analysis to follow. Fernández's training and scholarly research in sociolinguistics, which have focused on the influence of cultural environment and

discourse on hybrid creations (Fernández "Hybrid," "English," "La revolución"), inform the imaginative performance of interlingualism in his fiction in both Spanish and English.

On a more simple level of reading comprehension, Guillermo Irizarry observes that the chaotic, nonlinear structure of the early trio of Fernández novels, as well as their methodical play with truth horizons –for example, "abrupt leaps into the future" and "corrections of previous episodes"— require readers to act like detectives, "piecing together fragments of information" (Irizarry 600-1) in order to put together a basic understanding of plot. Jorge Febles advises that Fernández´s collage-like 1980s novels additionally oblige and reward outside research, citing Kristeva´s gloss of Bakhtin on "writing as reading of anterior literary corpus; every text as response to other already assimilated texts" (Febles "El pretexto" 70). Febles makes the case –by way of his detailed analysis of the double parodies underlying the "Who Killed C.R.?" chapter of *Raining Backwards*— that early Fernández fiction takes a bilingual *conceptista*, competitive relish in besting parodied pretexts at the level of those texts´ source material and intertexts. In the case of "Who Killed C.R.?," Febles demonstrates that Fernández's chapter parodies Vargas Llosa´s "¿Quién mató a Palomino Molero?," first signaling the Vargas Llosa short story as pretext by way of the chapter's opening description of a hanging, murdered corpse (Febles "El pretexto" 71-72). Following a running bilingual, bicultural dialogue with "different stylistic, ideological, and historical aspects that define Vargas Llosa's text," Febles argues that Fernández's parody culminates in the development of the detectives Captain Carter and Lieutenant Hodel (72-74). According to Febles, Carter and Hodel represent the crux of Fernández's game of jocular,

interlingual one-upmanship with Vargas Llosa's text, as Vargas Llosa's Lieutenant Silva and Sergeant Lituma parody archetypal English-language detective duos like Holmes-Watson and Poirot-Hastings. For Febles, Fernández's sleuths exceed Vargas Llosa's characterization of detectives in grotesque, demythologizing perspicacity toward the English-language detective genre (74). As well, Fernández's chapter adds a final parodic, interlingual shot across the bow by identifying the archetypal duo of Don Quixote and Sancho Panza as one of the key models for the conventional duos of English-language detective fiction parodied in *¿Quién mató a Palomino Molero?* (1986) (Febles "El pretexto" 71-6). William Deaver reinforces Febles's observations when, having investigated similar instances of competitive, interlingual parody in *Raining Backwards,* he remarks on the unpretentious, good-humored erudition behind Fernández's writing:

> [Fernández] draws from a vast array of resources that displays an amazing amount of erudition. Yet, his style is unpretentious. He stylizes other authors and critics who are pretentious. (Deaver "A Critical" 116).

In sum, Fernández´s work dissimulates the research that it both represents and requires, affecting an flippant, improvisational feeling by means of distractingly flamboyant gags and kitschy red herrings—e.g., the early 1980s "Who Shot J.R.?" publicity campaign for the T.V. show *Dallas* standing in as the most seemingly readily-identifiable but ultimately fruitless interpretive frame for "Who Killed C.R.?" (Febles "El pretexto" 71).

2.2 Vignette Structures in *La vida es un special*

The structural architecture and raw material for Fernández's detective hermeneutics and research method is the episodic vignette. Narrative information is splintered into numerous of these cell-like microfictions ranging in length from a few lines to a few pages. The vignettes consist of language documents of varying degrees of authority and perdurability, from the fleeting –disembodied snatches of conversation, broadcast programming, interior monologue— to written ephemera –newspaper clippings, letters, contest entries—to written documents carrying legal authority and/or meant for official business –architectural plans, state documents, royal warrants, and papal encyclicals. The vignettes are grouped together within brief chapter-like sections titled for the first vignette of the group. *La vida es un special*, for example, comprises forty-seven titled sections and seventy-seven vignettes over ninety-three pages. A representative section is "Areito IV," presenting four vignettes over three pages. The first is a sixteen-line fragment of half of a telephone conversation relating the speaker's disappointment at having missed a social event. The vignette has a banal start but becomes progressively more surreal, to the point where a radical readjustment of the reader's sense of truth horizon within the novel's increasingly oneiric logic becomes a productive reading strategy:

> --Sí recibí la invitación. Hasta me había comprado un traje de 50% algodón 50% polyester, wash and wear.
>
> [....]

--Le cablegrafié ofreciéndole mis excusas. ¡Tenía tantas ganas de bailar con la primera dama!

--Imagínese me fue imposible. La ciudad estaba bloqueada por la escuadra inglesa. Fue traumático.

--Después de la toma me quedé unos días más. Me dediqué a envenenar ingleses.

[....]

--Sí, la pura verdad es que Pepe Antonio tuvo mucho coraje. Y eso que la gente estaba algo acobardada.

[....]

--No. No tiene que venir desnuda. Cúbrase con una mota de algodón. No deje de invitar a Domingo. (35)

A rereading of the novel removes most of the reasons one might ordinarily have to suspect that the speaker is simply delusional or a compulsive liar when he describes armed invasion of Miami as the occasion for a first lady's social affair, a British military blockade, and cloak-and-dagger activities involving poisoning Englishmen with rum and plantains ("Con qué va a ser si no es con ron y platanito. Aniquilé a cinco" 35). After a first or second close examination of the novel, the reader is inclined less to doubt such a late Carpentier-like, future-oriented collision of temporalities and historical figures than to wonder how the speaker (Eloy de los Reyes) might be connected to Pepe [José] Antonio [Saco] and Domingo [Delmonte], and whether Domingo [Delmonte] is the same character who also goes by the name of "Zeppelin".

The second vignette under the "Areito IV" heading consists of a monologue graphically representing speech patterns associated with Afro-descendant speakers of Caribbean Spanish of working-class origin (e.g., aspirated /s/, transposition of /l/ and /r/, consonant elision). The speaker expresses disillusionment with life in South Florida and resolves to relocate her family north, to "the capital." She worries about finding more options for employment for herself and her family outside of seasonal labor in agriculture –i.e., cutting sugarcane— or domestic servitude in a Jim Crow environment of racial prejudice and segregation:

> Oi mihmo le voi a decil que no vamo daquí aquí no ai futuro pamisijo y no quiero que tengan que pasal porl lo que ehtoi pasando yo [...] no vamo pa´ la capital par nolte o pa´ donde sea pero mija no va cogel tabaldillo ni entral pol la puelta deatrá ni pol ná [...] ¿y qué futuro tiene Gilbeltico? sel machetero pol tre mese y morilse dambre lojotro nuebe [....] (35)

The third vignette constitutes both sides of two cryptic, vaguely sinister dialogues regarding, first, the delivery of a "gourd" to a woman named Magdalena and, second, a missing son. The first dialogue is eleven lines long, the second dialogue covers four lines, and it is left up to the reader to figure out where the speakers and conversations change, as no graphic textual clues are provided:

> --¿Qué es un baggie?
>
> --Buenas tardes.
>
> - --Espérese que ella viene.
>
> --Buenas tardes.

--Magdalena dónde está mi hijo.

--No sé.

--Hace más de dos horas que salió. (36)

By contrast, the fourth and final vignette of the section provides a clearly detailed, page-long scene conveying the sensory experiences and thoughts of a swimmer before, during, and after winning a race. The text opens with a loudspeaker announcement of the competition –"ATENCION: La competencia empezará a las 18:00. [....] Atención, atención, attention, please"— followed by a cocky interior monologue as the swimmer waits for the starting gun– "Mírame estoh músculos. ¡Estoy entero!" (37). The monologue introduces and clarifies in stream-of-consciousness style important plot and thematic points, including orienting information on the novel's social class structure and on the performance of gender within the fictional enclave's rhetoric of honor. The flow of self talk ends with a dissonant thought about the swimmer's personal manhood –"Yo le pregunté lo del plátano. Ella me rehpondió: Darling, el cache no se puede perder."— broken off by the starting announcement "BANG." The firing of the gun is the first of an accumulative series of three loud, phallocentric noises that drown out the swimmer's fleeting moment of anxiety and build him back up as the alpha male in public earshot: the starting "BANG," his wife's cheering, "C'mon honey. You can du it," and the introduction by loudspeaker of the archetypal winner's identity, "Jacinto Lamartiné," to the novel's roster of names (37).

Mary Vásquez compares the narrative effect of the many, chaotically arranged vignettes making up each of the three early Fernández novels to the random movement of

colored pieces of glass in a kaleidoscope. She describes "concentric narrative circles [that] move out and back, converge, separate and recombine, much as do those of a kaleidoscope" (Vásquez 93). Isabel Alvarez-Borland compares the "episodic and cyclical" vignette structure to that of Cabrera Infante´s *Tres tristes tigres* (168), an observation which reinforces our view of Fernández´s creative, competitive interest in the work of other writers and intertextual webs: "I see García Márquez [...] and Larra [...] and Cabrera Infante, pilgrim sound-maker who taught you a mood, a tone" (Febles, "A Character´s" 31). Finally, Febles observes that the vignette structure emphasizes the "monstrously *sui generis* chronotope" developed in Fernández´s novels (Febles "La tríada" 227). Chronotope is a concept developed by Mikhail Bakhtin, referring to the "time space" of a narrative text, which is conceived as the space on which societal forces and temporalities clash. The vignettes, consisting overwhelmingly of unmediated, disembodied language artifacts, contribute to the unreal feeling of the novel's urban geography, which, as Febles shows, is characterized by ambiguous allusion (e.g., a grocery), caricature (a YMCA building), and shrinking dimensions (Febles "La tríada" 227). Such distortional, reduced dimensions in turn create a novelistic space that, as Febles notes, is easily traversed on foot by Fernández´s characters, lending itself to "spontaneous dialogue springing out of daily human contact" (Febles "La tríada" 229). In other words, the usual chronotope of Fernández´s fiction tends toward either the slice-of-life tableau or phantasmagory in Miami's streets.

Criticism on Fernández´s first three novels largely frames the demanding linguistic, aesthetic, and hermeneutic elements of the work mentioned above within the

parameters of postmodernist theory, highlighting the novels' poetics of deconstruction, kitsch, and discursive relativism (e.g., Deaver "Menippean" 168, Ibieta 67, Vásquez 98-102). This kind of analysis tends to focus on Fernández's work as ethnic literature, dealing with the construction of community within U.S. Cuban exile culture. According to Irizarry, the "radical mix of literary genres, narrative voices, languages, and dialects" in Fernández´s work reinforces Fernández's "expression of his culture" as "radically heterogeneous," bringing to light "the heterogeneity of Cuban American culture and society" (Irizarry 593). For Febles, the superabundance of parody and narrative fragmentation in Fernández´s work may provoke critical thought or be taken as cynically self-indulgent, depending on their function in the portrayal of Cuban exile community. On one hand, Fernández´s dethroning humor and dialogic polyphony provide effective narrative technologies for bringing to light and deflating noxious myths:

> Mitos políticos, sociales, económicos, culturales, se desploman en la narrativa de Fernández como soldaditos de plomo agredidos por una pluma traviesa. Tal empeño desentronizador se vigoriza mediante una variedad lingüística que halla fundamento en la índole esencialmente dialogante de dichas ficciones. (Febles "El pretexto" 69)

On the other hand, Febles finds that Fernández's work occasionally takes *parodia sacra* to distasteful lows undermining a sincere sense of shared community among the U.S. Cuban exile, for example blasphemous gags at the expense of virtuous national figures such as Martí or fundamental collective values like agape love –fraternal love that treats

community as family— or good food and music (Febles, "A Character´s" 29-31, "La trayectoria" 294).

2.3 Fernández's Novels as Metacritical Archive

A quality of Fernández's fiction that has yet to be explored in depth is its treatment of historiographic matters in the postmodernist portrayal of the Cuban exile and Cuban chronotopes. Deaver indicates the development of systematic, meta-cognitive play with truth value in the novel *Raining Backwards,* providing textual evidence of a dialectic counterpoint between fiction and documentable historiography in the novel. However, Deaver doesn't develop the argument beyond affirming that the novel "challenges the reader to pursue the truth rather than to accept unquestioningly [...] what anyone else tells us, including critics and scholars since an authority's perspective determines history" (Deaver, "Menippean 168-70) Other references to historiography in criticism on Fernández refer to his chronicling of the gradual disappearance and assimilative transformation of Cuban exile culture in Florida (Smorkaloff 52, Alvarez Borland 106, Deaver, "Colonization" 112) and on the deconstruction of Cuban exile historiographic myths (Irizarry 595, Smorkaloff 54, 82).

Fernández's novels are ripe for critical investigation in view of historiography on account of, first, their meta-cognitive play between languages as sorts of archives, as discussed by Alvarez-Borland, Fernández, and Pérez Firmat. This is in the sense that Foucault describes the Archive in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* as a cognitive system

or imaginary determining the conceivable range of enunciations within a community of interest: "the first law of what can be said" (129). As well, the nonlinear, fragmentary vignette structure of the first three novels –requiring the implied reader to carry out detective work and research in order to select, arrange, and interpret the vignettes, as commented by Alvarez-Borland, Deaver, Febles, Irizarry, and Vásquez— simulates historiographic processes of research, narrative production, and archival management in the general, abstract conception of Foucault:

> [T]he Archive is also that which determines that all these things said do not accumulate endlessly in an amorphous mass, nor are they inscribed in an unbroken linearity, nor do they disappear at the mercy of chance external accidents; but they are grouped together in distinct figures, composed together in accordance with specific regularities [...]. (129)

As Vásquez remarks, Fernández's novels present the conceit of "an overall narrative consciousness [that] gathers and places materials" (93). In his parodic "English only" novel *Raining Backwards*, the narrative collector of documentary vignettes is an implied, invisible presence. However, his Spanish-language novels feature characters who collect and organize the archival materials constituting the novels' overall content. Works such as *La vida es un special* thus follow in the Latin American tradition of historiographic fiction by writers like Borges, Carpentier, and García Márquez, dating back to Palma's *Tradiciones peruanas*.

In sum, analysis of the author's work in light of the production of history, as well as of a more precise view of the uses of U.S., Cuban, and Caribbean historiography

therein, is an area that needs further research. This is especially the case now as his work has transcended its early cult status as an outlier of ethnic Cuban exile literature in readership and criticism.

2.4 *La vida es un special ~~$1.50~~ .75*: Overview and Context

La vida es un special represents a departure in Fernández's writing from the 1970s short fiction of *Cuentos sin rumbo* –a conventional short story collection format that records "a culture with some affection, and nostalgia"— to the critical, "threatening" approach of Fernández's experimental novels (Fernández "Roberto" 119). The thematic difference is most apparent in the *La vida*'s implicit, acid satire of the 1960s-1980s-era Cuban exile constructed as an imagined "moral community" centered in Miami (Forment 60). Within the Miami enclave, according to sociologist Carlos Forment, the performance of archconservative views and discourse was a prerequisite, from the 1960s through 1979, in order to make good in the local economy (Forment 48-60). According to De la Torre, the management of a rhetoric of family honor was additionally required in order to maintain social class status (*La lucha* 95). Satire of the "moral community" is carried out in *La vida es un special*, then, by way of a dual plot structure hinging on the representation of (1) politics as a function of business and (2) religion as a function of politics.

2.4.1 Monarchy, Military Intervention, and Sugar Aristocracy

The political plot in *La vida es un special* follows the selection, coronation, and assassination of "the queen of the factory" ("reina de la factoría" Fernández, *La vida* 39). Details about the factory are sketchy, but some facts can be pieced together. First, the *factoría* comprises a complex of colonial manufacturing plants covering the novel's oneiric version of the South Florida region (24, 89). The kinds of manufacturing specifically mentioned are machine sewing (15) and sugar production (85, 91). The factory holds weekend dances at which members of varied backgrounds mix (50). A lecherous foreman abuses his position of authority to take advantage of female workers (15, 68). Also, while the *factoría* defines the novel's political chronotope –"Factoría es un establecimiento de tipo comercial situado en un país colonial" (Fernández, *La vida* 24)— not all of the novel's characters work there. At the equivalent lower middle-class level of employment, Ricardo de la Espriella works the nightshift at a beach hotel (24). At the working poor extreme, Nivaria Pérez's husband works as a seasonal laborer harvesting sugar (35-36). At the capitalist extreme, Jacinto Lamartiné owns several sugar-related business concerns, including one in Puerto Rico (51, 85). In sum, the novel's representation of class politics combines poetic logic and materialist historicity.

The queen is chosen from a field of hundreds of elected candidates who advance to finalist status by performing in a series of children's games: sack race, pin the tail on the donkey, *pegaditos, el chucho escondido, la gallinita ciega,* and *los escondidos* (Fernández, *La vida* 58-59). These games are broadcast by television and radio,

sponsored by San Pedro Plus aspirin –"alivia y embellece"—and involve the participation of a tourism commissioner, a corporation called Seats International, Inc., and Monsignor Williams, an activist clergyman recalling Miami priest Monsignor Bryan Walsh. The historical Walsh, in collaboration with the U.S. State Department, "several U.S. businessmen," "several members of the American Chamber of Commerce," the Puerto Rican industrialist Maurice Ferré, and James Baker of Havana´s Ruston Academy (Walsh 390-91), arranged for 14,000 unescorted Cuban minors to be flown out of Cuba to the United States between December 1961 and October 1962 (Walsh 412).

According to the novel, the factory queen has powers (poderes) that are undetermined and seem unserious until debated at a constitutional assembly. The assembly takes place at the Marine Auditorium and is sponsored by Coca Cola. Participants include delegates from the Cuban municipalities in exile (e.g., Guane Libre, Nipe Libre), the "special delegate and observer" John Doe –who plays the plenipotentiary role of Leonard Wood in Cuba's 1900-1901 constitutional assembly (Roig 58-62)—and sixteenth-century Dominican humanist Fray Bartolomé de las Casas, who gets thrown out by McCarthyite consensus– "Fueraaa, fueraaa, fueraaa, sáquenlo que es un infiltrao" (Fernández, *La vida* 82-83). While the assembly succeeds in producing an "act of monarchy" (89), the reader doesn't find out the specifics, e.g., whether the queen will have absolute or limited powers, or how her reign will be succeeded.

The document from the assembly that the text does reproduce is John Doe's "Chi Clause," a satirical, hyperbolic take on the third and fourth articles of the Platt Amendment. The Platt Amendment, passed by the U.S. Senate in February, 1901 to

amend funding bill H.R. 14017, defined post-occupation legal relations between the United States and Cuba in terms advantageous to U.S. business and military interests. The Platt Amendment was adopted as an appendix to the 1901 Cuban Constitution and signed as a permanent treaty between the U.S. and Cuba in 1903, with all eight articles of the original amendment intact (Roig 22). Article One precludes Cuba from entering into any treaty or agreement that might threaten U.S. interests in the island, and Article Two prohibits Cuba from taking on national debt. Article Three gives the United States broad authority to intervene in Cuban affairs, and Article Four retroactively gives blanket authorization for all U.S. actions during the military occupation. Article Five requires the Cuban government to carry out U.S. government plans for sanitation and disease prevention throughout the island, and Article Six excludes the Isle of Pines, an islet off the southwest coast, from Cuba's jurisdiction. Article Seven obliges Cuba to sell or rent land to the United States government for the purpose of the construction of naval bases, and Article Eight requires that a permanent U.S.-Cuban treaty be based on the seven preceding articles (Roig 23-24).

In *La vida*'s constitutional assembly, the "delegates from the bay-bordering jurisdictions" present the "Chi Clause" on John Doe's behalf, to be "incorporated in the supreme law of the state, which will be made effective during the second reign": "Las delegaciones de las jurisdicciones bahía-bordeantes, después de la larga conferencia con Míster Doe, han presentado esta cláusula que será incorporada a la suprema ley del estado, la cual tomará vigencia durante el segundo reinado" (Fernández, *La vida* 83). The Chi Clause plays on the open-ended and paternalistic qualities of the Platt

Amendment, especially Articles Three and Four, taking them to the hyperbolic, poetic extreme of a nursery rhyme, "Comadrita la rana," sung in gibberish:

> La cláusula dice así:
>
> ¿Chicochimachidrichita chila chirachina
>
> chiya chivichino chisu chimachirichidicito
>
> chidel chimonchite? [….] (83)

While ridiculous on the face of it, the Chi Clause does play a decisive role in the political outcome of the factory monarchy in the novel's ambivalent U.S. Cuban chronotope, and in the narrative fates of the novel's major characters (92).

From among the finalists for queen, Pablito Romanov draws the name of Gisela Acevedo de Vargas, from "factoría B-Mar" –"seaside colonial factory B"— to be crowned Her Royal Majesty. The factory worker, skilled competitor at juvenile games, and lucky winner is instantly hailed as Queen Gisela I on the electronic scrolling billboard of a Good Year blimp (Fernández, *La vida* 89). Princess Grace of Monaco crowns Gisela and hands her the scepter, Msgr. Williams blesses her, and the crowd dances and celebrates following the minuet-*danzón* performed by Gisela and her husband, the new consort Apolinar Vargas. The only words Gisela speaks at her coronation, though, and indeed throughout the novel, are disjointed, hackneyed Latin aphorisms:

> Audaces fortuna juvat. Abusus non tollit usum. Bonum vinum leatificat cor homihis. Et nunc reges, intelligente; erudimini qui judicatis terram. [….] (89)

Gisela is a generic, interchangeable character. The only hint of her personality is that she is petulantly jealous of Linda Lucía, a fourteen-year-old young woman tattooed and dyed to look like the Cuban flag:

> Su fama llegó a rivalizar a la de la reina. Y la reina dijo que alea jacta est. Y afirmó que el día de su coronación no quería a Linda Lucía, por linda y patriótica que fuera, que ella había hecho mucha campaña y se había sacrificado muchos week-ends para que luego votaran por ella, y esa chiquita bandera no le iba a estropear su coronación. (Fernández, *La vida* 21).

Gisela ruins Linda Lucía's seven-year career in winning Cuban Independence Day costume contests and appearing at events as a patriotic mascot for hire: "[S]e solicitó para cada evento, hasta la solicitaban para cumpleaños [....] Terminó su juventud eclipsada y olvidada como una estrella de Hollywood" (21). This sets up the most immediately consequential of the novel's three conspiracies against the factory queen. Linda Lucía assassinates Queen Gisela I at the urging of Cecilia Valdés (23, 91). Cecilia Valdés, a beautiful, young woman of so-called mixed race, the archetypal desirable *mulata* in Cuban literature, is the eponymous character in Villaverde's nineteenth-century novel *Cecilia Valdés o La loma del angel* (1882). In the novel, she falls in love with Leonardo Gamboa, the son of sugar plantation owner Cándido Gamboa, who turns out to be her father by one of his black servants. When Leonardo betrays Cecilia to marry a white woman, a black musician named José Dolores Pimienta, who loves Cecilia unrequitedly, murders Leonardo at her vengeful insistence.

Conspiracies pervade *La vida es un special*. The second paragraph of the novel's prologue –in the degraded, anachronistic voice of late-seventeenth- and early-eighteenth-century Creole poet Manuel de Zequeira— refers to "una llamada conspiración de la escalera" as a "ficción desorbitada" spun by the novel (7). This is a historical allusion to the 1844 mass arrest, interrogation, torture, and murder of over four thousand Afro-descendent Cubans in Matanzas and Cardenas. Spanish authorities claimed that the victims –including the writers Francisco Manzano and "Plácido" Gabriel de la Concepción Valdés— were involved in a grand, anti-White conspiracy to provoke massive slave revolt and race rebellion in Cuba (Pérez, *Cuba* 100). The infamous event is known as la Conspiración de la Escalera, due to, first, the Spanish authorities' assertion of a black conspiracy against whites and, second, to the use of ladders as instruments of torture for forcing confessions (Griñán Peralta 72-73).

Departing from the novel's provocative opening allusion to Cuba's "bárbaro terror blanco" of the Escalera Conspiracy (Benítez Rojo, "La cuestión" 80), *La vida es un special* interweaves conspiracies ranging from Freddy García's drug trafficking ring (18) and two lovers who conspire to murder a spouse (20, 36) to the phantasmagoric plotting and collaboration between nineteenth-century Paraguayan general and president Francisco Solano López, the U.S. Air Force and Marines, and a fictional, plutocratic Cuban exile cabal called the Legion of the Turkey. The Legion is run jointly by Msgr. Williams and the wife of Cuban exile sugar baron/champion swimmer Jacinto Lamartiné. There is also an anonymous group that plots in secrecy against the factory monarchy on the grounds of democratic principle (e.g., "El gran temor mío es que se establezca la

monarquía hereditaria y no electiva" 39). The reader never finds out what happens with the group, but the vignette covering one of its secret meetings adds to the novel's overall paranoid ambience and calls attention to the pervasive narrative undercurrent of transnational intrigue:

> --¿Oígame y dónde va a ser la próxima reunión?
>
> --¡No pregunte sandece! En la ciudad eterna, ¡en Roma! (39)

More specifically, the vignette reinforces the dread of the Escalera affair introduced in the prologue. The conspiracy scene is a reminder that, according to the prologue's anachronistic Manuel de Zequeira, the novel gravitates around "una llamada conspiración de la escalera".

The political plot of the novel indeed ends in the aftermath of a colonialist race war in the sense of nineteenth-century writing on the racial character of strong and weak nations (e.g., Hegel's *Encyclopaedia* and *History of Philosophy,* Josiah Strong's *Our Country,* and Alfred Paul Karl Eduard Schultz's *Race or Mongrel*). In the denouement, "las fuerzas de seguridad" also detain "numerosas personas" after Linda Lucía confesses for assassinating the queen "a instancias de Cecila Valdés." This is based on the official suspicion that Cecilia Valdés might be an acronym for some subversive conspiracy (91). As a result, many of the novel's major characters –the misfits—end up either being executed or condemned to life sentences in prison. The novel's cataclysmic events are brought about by the Legion of the Turkey, the novel's ultimate conspiracy.

The Legion of the Turkey represents a site of intersection between Cuba's planter class, U.S. military and business interests, and surrealistically collaborating figures from

European and South American history standing in as international metonyms for archconservative, militaristic, and autocratic government. The latter group includes Germany's Hohenzollern dynasty, Austria's Clement Metternich, and Paraguay's founding caudillos José Gaspar Rodríguez [the infamous Doctor Francia] and Francisco Solano López,. The Legion is behind both the repressive violence and the assumption of autocratic power following Linda Lucía's assassination of Gisela. With the aid of an 1898-style U.S. military intervention, the Legion overthrows Apolinar's regency and imposes czarist rule by the Swabian/Prussian/German House of Hohenzollern (48, 90-91). In the civil war that breaks out after the factory queen's assassination, the Legion of the Turkey is backed by the U.S. Air Force and Marines, under the command of Solano López, with the aim of installing Esperanzita Rodríguez de Hohenzollern as czarina. The civil war is an unequal battle waged by elites against commoners. The Legion of the Turkey's forces overwhelm the factory-worker partisans of Apolinar and his family, who are supported by the more working-class branches of the U.S. military, the Army and National Guard (90-91). Because Msgr. Williams and John Doe are in league with the Legion of the Turkey (85-86), the slaughter has political cover. Doe orders a ceasefire and imposes martial law, backed by sixty Air Force fighter jets, three battalions of Marines, and the blank-check legal authority of "Chicochimachidrichita chila chirachina" (92). Doe appoints Clement Metternich –the leader of the conservative monarchist 1815 Congresses of Vienna—to act as proconsul of the occupied South Florida territory until the imperial reign of the Hohenzollern dynasty, dating back to 1061 (Feldhahn), can be established. The final three news briefs relating the novel's political denouement,

summarized above, are sponsored by companies whose names evoke Cuba's long colonial period and contested independence: "la Compañía Importadora de Viveres, S.A.," "el Bazaar 20 de Mayo," and "la fábrica de azúcar Ramona" (90-91).

2.4.2 Transcultured Turkeys

A religious subplot relates the hijacking of the cult of San Given, an improvisational, syncretic faith which, at its most simple essence, is characterized by the day-to-day practice of charity, hospitality, thrift and candor. San Given –an interlingual homophone of Thanksgiving—first appears as the lead character in the television soap opera *San Given, santo y varón*. T.V.'s San Given is a turkey farmer who performs miraculous feats –e.g., he makes a flying leap to untangle a child's kite from a power line, like a cross between Superman and Benjamin Franklin (17)—and shares his turkeys with the needy (31). As San Given's fame grows, he is brought to the attention of the Holy See –the bishop of San Given's parish sets a case in motion for San Given to be made a saint (17, 31, 44)—and the Turkey Distributor corporation. The head Turkey Distributor, Sr. Morrell, ominously tracks San Given to the bishop's office (44). By the cliffhanging end of "San Given Episode III," both the bishop and Morrell want to find San Given, but the turkey farmer has disappeared (44). At this point in the T.V. series, the real San Given appears in transparent form seated on top of Nivaria Pérez's refrigerator, with a turkey under his arm (77).

He is an impish character who, like Nivaria, speaks in a bilingual- and Afro-Caribbean-inflected Spanish:

> Abía unombre tranparente con un guanajo bajoel braso sentado sobrel frigidaire. Me recobré un poco y le dije alaparecío: "Gua du yu guan?" El me rehpondió: "Soy San Given." Entonceh yo le dije; "San Given de la novela?" Y el me dijo: "Yes, el mihmitico." Ya má relá le dije: "Pero ehcóndete mira que tandan buhcando." Pero él me dijo: "Cálmate esoé sólo una novela. [….]" [….] Tú sabe yo ehtaba argo orgullosa que semubiera ehcojío a mí [...]. Y él me dijo: "Ubo un solteo y salió su número, yu got di loqui nomber joni." (77)

San Given instructs Nivaria to collect money in an empty can with a hole in the top, to have a sanctuary built for him. Refashioning the U.S. Thanksgiving holiday, San Given's feast day is to be celebrated on the last Thursday in November. Irizarry comments that the connection "provides a humorous commentary on religious syncretism, as this combination of fictional items plays on a pun on the mispronunciation of Thanksgiving as a name in the Catholic calendar of saints" (595-96). To expand on Irizarry's observation, the cult of San Given also mimics several formal elements of the religious practice of santería, the syncretic, Afro-Cuban variation of West African-derived orisha voudou: the decentralized construction and upkeep of an orisha's, i.e., one of voudou's divine beings; sanctuary by an individual priest or priestess (González-Wippler 289-90); the everyday offering given according to the orisha's idiosyncratic preferences (Arióstegui 23); and the syncretic identification of each orisha with a Catholic saint,

including a shared feast day according to the Catholic calendar of saints (Arióstegui 23-24, González-Wipler 37-38).

On one level, San Given's reinvention of Thanksgiving subverts the Protestant Anglo version of U.S. national history and culture reinforced by the founding narrative of Plymouth Rock. Thanksgiving is rewritten to commemorate heterodox improvisation, with a hint of diasporic African roots, television, and charitable turkey-sharing. The founding fathers of Thanksgiving are replaced by the founding mother of San Given, Nivaria Pérez, who is an Afro-Caribbean working-class woman. This is in line with Fernández's statement in an interview about the United States' constitutive multiculturalism and how that idea is repressed in national discourse:

> [I]t is a multicultural society, but people don't know that it is a multicultural society, and they resist it. [….] Sometimes they pay lip-service to it. [….] For instance, in the English Department there is a faction that refuses to teach anything but Anglo-American or English or the European tradition, but none of these literatures from other places. I think it betrays what the United States is all about. Because it's just presenting one side. [….] I mean, you shouldn't just present what you call the ethnic writers just because they are ethnic writers. They should be introduced as part of the American experience and not as a different entity. (Fernández, "Roberto" 109)

More precisely than constitutive multiculturalism, the San Given narrative brings to bear Fernando Ortiz's concept of transculturation, introduced in *Contrapunteo cubano del tabaco y el azúcar* (1940):

> Entendemos que el vocablo *transculturación* expresa major las diferentes fases del proceso transitivo de una cultura a otra, porque éste no consiste solamente en adquirir una distinta cultura, que es lo que en rigor indica la voz angloamericana *acculturation,* sino que el proceso implica también necesariamente la pérdida o desarraigo de una cultura precedente, lo que pudiera decirse una parcial desculturación, y, además, significa la consiguiente creación de nuevos fenómenos culturales que pudieran denominarse de neoculturación. (260)

La vida es un special, as is explored in more detail in the next section of this chapter, gives poetic expression to Ortiz's theory of transculturation in light of (1) unequal class relations between and among colonized and colonizing cultures and (2) the context of Ortiz's 1940 anti-colonialist criticism of the sugar industry and its damaging social and political effects in Cuba (Santí 62).

Of the major characters in *La vida es un special*, Nivaria is the most clearly aware of her present circumstances, the most willing to leave cultural baggage behind – including her experience in the South Florida exile enclave—and the most directly affected, both in Cuba and South Florida, by the dehumanizing, institutionally racist culture of a Big Sugar economy:

> Oi mihmo le voi a decil que no vamo daquí aquí no ai futuro pamisijo y no quiero que tengan que pasal pol lo que ehtoi pasando yo [...] oy mihmo le digo a Gilbelto que no vamo pa' la capital par nolte o pa' donde sea pero mija no va cogel tabaldillo ni entral pol la puelta deatrá ni pol ná y quién diría que ehta son mano si lo que paresen son cahco de caballo [....] (35)

Nivaria launches the new phenomenon of the San Given cult as a matter-of-fact extension of hospitality and as an adaptation to new routines called for as circumstances develop:

> Tú sabe One senfumó. Pero dejoel guanajo que tenía bajoel braso. Imagínate yo no sé dónde boya metel-lo. [....] Tú sabe lo que te quiero decil, que San Given y el guanajo sean la mihma pelsona, así que boya ponel el sofá cama que tengo con sábana limpia pa' que sacuehte el santo. Y ahora en cuanto llegue boya limpial la casa con Mister Clin y pinoaroma pol siacaso bienen esa jente quel dijo. To ehto telo cuento a ti polque sé que no le basáir a nadie conel chihme y pa' que mayude acer mah lata pa' la colecta. Eso sí One el santuario tiene quesel frente al mal. (77)

For Nivaria, the San Given cult represents an extension of her own adaptive practices of *transcultureo*.

2.4.3 Re-archiving Operation Peter Pan and the Mariel Exodus

San Given becomes the focal point for the poetics of transculturation in *La vida es un special*, a poetics which serves the novel's characters who, for one reason or another, attempt to transcend identification with a national "moral community" of "Sugar People" (Fernández, *La vida* 68). The would-be renegade characters rarely end up in situations that they would have predicted, and the road is always rocky for them. As transculturation is considered an open-ended "transitive process," wherein culture contact results in partial losses and forms of cultural adaptation in an ongoing processs, as per Ortiz, few of the characters in *La vida es un special* are able to escape the historical baggage and social structures constituting what Benítez Rojo calls "la nación azucarera" ("La cuestión" 80). For example, Freddy García runs away from symbolically and materially exploitative first-generation Cuban exile relatives, but he ends up turning tricks for tourists and working as a peon in the export industry of drug trafficking (17-18)—"Wasn't it wonderful that we met Freddy. He is such a Latin lover. And he gave us some good stuff" (81). Rather than achieve independence along the lines of his adolescent macho bravado –"un par de ruedas, comida, un techo y unas cuantas jebitas" (18)—Freddy turns out to be bound by the trans-Caribbean Plantation system to which Antonio Benítez Rojo refers in *The Repeating Island.* This work applies principles of Chaos mathematics –i.e., reiterative patterns and variations amid a large set of of seemingly chaotic data—and elements of poststructuralist theory to posit the Caribbean as a cultural space unbound by physical geography. In this sense, Freddy validates the epithets hurled at him by a racist gang just before starting out in his pursuit of U.S. thug

life: “You will surely wish you were going back to your country in a banana boat. You bunch of filthy banana cutters” (32).

In an added twist, Freddy is readily identified as an alumnus of the 1961-1962 Operation Pedro Pan: “Y por fin un día tres de julio recibió el telegrama y se fue Freddy antes de cumplir los doce años y se tuvo que ir solo, pués a nosotros no nos llegó hasta siete años después, y Freddy se fue a vivir a casa de una prima de mi esposo” (Fernández, *La vida* 11). Operation Pedro Pan was the joint effort of the U.S. State Department, U.S. and Cuban exile businesses, and the Catholic Church –spearheaded by James Baker of Ruston Academy and Msgr. Walsh—to transport unaccompanied minors out of socialist Cuba to the United States:

> We would receive more than 14,000 children at the airport. We would take 7,464 children under care. We would place them in foster care in 35 states under the auspices of 95 different child welfare agencies. (Walsh 412)

The Operation Pedro Pan children were made out to be members of an upstanding group of Cuban exile youth and participants in an exemplary Cold War collaboration between the U.S. private, public, and religious sectors in the broader fight against Communism (e.g., Walsh 413-14). This “official version” has been contradicted by the written testimonies of Operation Pedro Pan alumni that describe a more complicated, solitary experience of deprivation:

> Cuando llegué al aeropuerto me encontré con que nadie me estaba esperando. Había una gente del “refugio” que se ocupaba de los

> muchachos que llegaban solos. […] Me llevaron para casa de Father Walsh, que era quien se ocupaba de los niños [...] y de ahí para Florida City. [….] Había un comedor muy grande, fuera de las residencias, donde se comía por turnos. La supuesta enfermería era una barraca del ejército donde vivían el médico y la señora, con unos cuantos muchachos enfermos que dormían en catres. También había una supuesta escuela donde todos los niveles escolares estaban mezclados y no se aprendía nada [...]. [L]a sensación que teníamos constantemente era como de carencia, de pérdida, de que faltaba algo. (Grupo Areito 32-34)

Freddy García's story in the novel reinforces in an exaggerated way the revisionist testimony surrounding Operation Pedro Pan. Freddy's guardians keep him away from school to get maximum financial benefit out of him at the lowest cost. For example, when Freddy earns $5.75, his relatives take the five dollars and leave Freddy with seventy-five cents (17). Solitude and want are condensed in the beating Freddy gets when he asks for a pair of shoes:

> Mientras me decían que era tremendo haragán porque les dije que quería ir a la escuela y repartir periódicos por la madrugada. Les dije que por favor. Entonces, les dije que necesitaba un par de tenis. Me sopló un sopapo que casi me deja sin conocimiento. Esa misma noche me huí y dormí debajo del puente, cerca del río. Amanecí todo picado de mosquitos y de cuanto bicho había por ahí. Caminé más de 20 cuadras y me matriculé en la escuela. (17-18)

On the other hand, the ensuing developments of Freddy's story —gang involvement, criminal acts of violence, drug trafficking, and Freddy's implied ambiguous performance of sexuality (40, 81) – redeploy into the life story of an Operation Pedro Pan alumnus the stereotypical tropes by which the Mariel émigrés –the group of Cuban émigrés that arrived over the summer of 1980 in the boatlift departing from Cuba's Mariel harbor— were most commonly misrepresented as a group.

The 1980 Mariel group of émigrés was demonized in the U.S. press –negative coverage in the *Miami Herald* reached 90% for the week of May 26, 1980—and smeared as being made up of criminals and "degenerates" (Portes and Stepick 23). Jorge Mas Canosa, the founder and chief executive of the Cuban American National Foundation (1981-1996), referred to the "incalculable número de ex-convictos" and "delincuencia" among the Mariel émigrés ("Nos sentimos" 359-60). De la Torre observes that the *machista* official rhetoric used by the Castro regime to disqualify the Mariel exile from the national category of Cuban –"scum, parasites, lumpen (from Marx, modified to mean 'men without manhood'), and homosexuals" (*La Lucha* 95)— was echoed in Miami, with added racist overtones, to reinforce the construction of a consolidated "golden exile" ethnic identity: "Exilic Cubans see themselves […] as God's 'good basket of figs' as opposed to the 'bad basket of figs' which Jeremiah uses to represent […] all those who remain behind" ("A Cuban," an essay published on De la Torre's professional website). According to De la Torre, the "golden exile" ethnic identity, beyond ideology, is constructed on the grounds of whiteness and a patriarchal view of family honor –"honor is bestowed on a family through the machismo of its men, while *vergüenza* (shame)

befalls the family in which the men lack macho qualities" (*La Lucha* 85). De la Torre observes that the affirmation of a consolidated "golden exile" ethnic identity most often rests on an expressed hagiographic view of the earliest Cold War-defined waves of Cuban exile as defined apart from the "new 'darker' Cubans" that arrived with the Mariel exodus (*La Lucha* 95, "A Cuban"). De la Torre´s argument is borne out by Mas Canosa's list of "shared" Cuban exile ethnic attributes to be defended against the "scourge" of Mariel, written in thinly veiled racist and homophobic terms:

> [H]emos triunfado en el intricado campo de la ciencia y hasta en el competitivo mundo de los negocios hemos superado a los más obstinados rivales. Además, hemos deslumbrado a los extraños con nuestra vertebración familiar, amor filial y fraternal. Hemos sido la excelsa representación de un pueblo laborioso, con un muy alto concepto de la moral individual y colectiva. [….] Esa escoria humana ha vivido en un ambiente de miseria y escasez, y, sin principios morales que la forzara a repelar [sic] el robo, apelaron al delito como forma fácil de adquirir lo ambicionado. [....] Entre la indolencia y la vagancia existe una zona nebulosa difícil de delimitar, pero sea cual fuere el calificativo aplicable, muchos de los recién llegados repudian el trabajo, y sabemos que la alternativa de la ociosidad es la delincuencia. ("Nos sentimos" 359)

The story of Freddy's attempted escape to independence, resulting in perpetual imprisonment (40, 91-92), serves as a critique of the quasi-religious rhetoric of honor and claims to morality underlying such constructions of Cuban exile ethnic identity. It also

hints at a metaphor for Cuba's thwarted attempts at gaining national independence from 1868 through 1902 and its "achievement" of a questionable independence thereafter. Freddy is justified in leaving his relatives and capable of doing so, but he faces insurmountable odds to leave behind the "nación azucarera." He's put in prison, first, for purveying a vicious plant (40) –it might well have been for gratifying the illicit desires of tourists (81)— and incarcerated permanently following the clampdown by the Cuban sugar aristocracy, in collusion with the U.S. government and the Catholic Church, in which Freddy is condemned as a co-conspirator of Cecilia Valdés (90).

2.4.4 Turkey Wars: Big Sugar, Exile Aristocracy, the Catholic Church, and the U.S. Military Occupation of the San Given Shrine

Nivaria Pérez's choices are better reasoned than Freddy's –Nivaria is the most level-headed and pragmatic character in the novel—and she keeps her actions strictly within legal bounds. She is a beneficent character. She is aware of class interests and exile social hierarchies of power going on around her, and how circumstances affect her, her family, and her friends: she plans and modifies her plans accordingly. However, she suffers a worse fate than Freddy. As a result of taking on the founding of San Given's cult, Nivaria is executed by the regime of Doe, Metternich, and the Legion of the Turkey (91).

The reader's first composite view of Nivaria is that she is charitable at work with Sylvia González de Espriella (15), a middle-class woman with aristocratic pretensions

who had humiliated Nivaria and treated her cruelly in Cuba (10-11). Nivaria teaches Sylvia how to use a sewing machine and adapt to the working life at the factory (15). In the next section of her storyline, Nivaria takes three charitable initiatives: to get her son out of the working life of seasonal labor for Big Sugar; which offers no advancement, to get her daughter out of domestic servitude; and to move her family north to escape Florida's Jim Crow social structures (35-36). Nivaria denies any identification with the factory, Cuban exile, or nation. Her motivations are her family and friends, her neighbors, and her pocketbook, and she says so forthrightly:

> [M]e tumban mi pesito semanal ace doce año, tuelv year jony, y total paqué si yo vine pacá mucho ante polque el cable que me comía ayá se ehtaba bolviendo el electric company.
>
> --¿Qué qué poco patriota?
>
> --Déjame decilte, Oneida, one moar tain jony, que cuando uhtede se ehtaban echando frehco donde tú sabe, ya yo me la ehtaba puliendo aquí. (53)

While there is an element of criticism of consumer culture in *La vida es un special* –i.e., the relentless barrage of advertising to make workers identify with what they consume rather than what they produce (Deaver, "La vida" 36-39)— for Nivaria, navigating the specials is a way to make ends meet while budgeting in measures to work her family toward a more independent life. At the same time, shopping for bargains is part of how Nivaria interacts socially, which is how she becomes one of the novel's most trustworthy

sources of community news (e.g., 57, 66-69). Nivaria approaches consumption with conscious agency and simply professes to enjoy specials:

> --Ante de que cuelgue, ai tremendo ehpecial en Siar. Tú sabe yo siempre faitin el infleichon.
>
> --Tú tiene rasón, si argún día puedo ilme dehta mielda lo único que boi a ehtrañal banasel loh ehpeciar. (69)

In the end, Nivaria's son is able to start a construction company, and her daughter completes training as a stylist and opens up a beauty parlor (53). This is just a tease of social mobility, however, which is where the religious plot thread picks back up.

Having founded the San Given cult and incorporated it seamlessly as her own secular faith of transculturation –e.g., referring to Freddy: "Imajínate sabrá San Given cuando salga de la cárcel" (57)—Nivaria is extorted by Toto Lamartiné and Msgr. Williams to renounce all rights, responsibilities, and credit as a founder. Lamartiné ("esa cabrona de la legion del pavo") and Williams ("el aura flaco") force entry to Nivaria's house, kidnap and threaten to kill the turkey Nivaria has been taking care of –which might or might not be the actual San Given— and threaten to burn down Nivaria's daughter's beauty parlor:

> Tú sabe la jugarreta quemisieron esa cabrona dela legión del pavo. Figúrate que dihpué quice eberisin le guhto lidea y selo dijeron al aura flaco ese. En seguida se mobilisaron y binieron ami casa. Esa noche me secuehtraron al pavo. Entonce mamenasaron y me dijeron que teníaque renuncial a too mi derecho al santuario o delo contrario matarían al pavo y

> le quemarían el biuti parlor a Zaidita. [....] Pol fin, leh dije renunsio que pa' mí lo impoltante era quese salbara el guanajo. (88)

The threats undo the modest social progress of the Pérez family –"Ya selo dije amija que vendiera la biuti parlor y al baron que liquideichon conel conhtrochion" (88)—and Nivaria recognizes that she has lost the opportunity to escape:

> ¿Qué te pareció el coroneichon? Imagínate a mí me dejó conla maus abierta. Primero creía quera alguna propaganda paranuncial algo quiba ehtal enehpecial. Tú sabe o alguna otracosa delo ehponsol del concurso, pero cuando bi al monsiñor ese y ala Ehperanzita y al Mihter Doe, me dije coño Nivy la cosa ban serio. ¡Y ahora sique meboi pal cará! (88)

Nivaria ends her last phone conversation with her friend Oneida with a final act of code-switching, closing with a conventional English-language goodbye, "Ai col you leiter jony" (88). The banality of the farewell adds to the effect of realism in the dialogue and keeps Nivaria's last words free of sentimentality or pomp. The subtext, though, is warm affection for her friend Oneida in spite of the latter's implied, irritating differences of opinion toward the autocrats who have ruined Nivaria's life:

> --¿Qué a ti siempre te ha gustao tenel reye?
>
> [....]
>
> --Bueno chica nese caso no tiene tanto problema si Apolinal fue novio tullo en Luyano. Bueno pero eso é mientra le dure la consortería, así é como se dise lo quél é. ¡Oyeme pero esto se cae!
>
> [....]

--Bueno mierma malegro que tallan guhtao loh globoh de la reina. (88)

The code-switching of "Ai col you leiter jony" presents a simple shared act of transculturation between friends, in contrast to the official Cuban-American collusion of U.S. and Cuban exile leaders –the legion of turkeys— that have hijacked Thanksgiving as well as San Given and killed Nivaria's family's modest "American Dream."

Following the farewell, Nivaria asks her friend to place a numbers bet for her according to the transcultured Caribbean system of la Charada, a system of number symbolism incorporating elements from West African and Chinese numerology, as well as from the kabbala. Nivaria bets on eighty-eight, which in the Charada corresponds to the death of an important person, a "big death": "Apúntame die al eitei, muelto grande, big dez" (88). In this way, Nivaria correctly predicts the assassination of Queen Gisela, identifying with alarm the coalition of Esperanzita, Mr. Doe, and the Legion of the Turkey present at the coronation. Nivaria sees the bloodbath through the exile kitsch: "Gisela no dura mucho," "esase queda sin corona el día meno pensao y sabrá San Given lo que bengaquí" (88). At the same time, Nivaria is betting on her own death, as a coda to her tragic recognition scene. Nivaria's fortune has been irretrievably reversed, a fact which she acknowledges twice: "meboi pal cará," "Poreso e que meboi pal cará" (88). Nivaria's powerful wish, to see her children rise above work situations of peonage and achieve a measure of independence and dignity, has shattered against the limits of the violent exploitation of power, blind ambition, and racism perpetrated by the official "community": "Acuéldate que la legion del pavo ehta tra de toeso" (88). Nivaria's fatal mistake is not to have moved her family away from the Cuban exile enclave and out of

South Florida sooner. Nivaria is executed by the U.S. occupation and the Legion of the Turkey (92). What happens to her family and to her adopted turkey is left to the reader's imagination.

The vignette "Shrine" presents the T.V. news version of the Legion of the Turkey's takeover of the San Given cult. San Given and Nivaria's sanctuary are denatured and subsumed to the category of national symbol:

> Señoras y señores, ladies and gentlemen, el Canal Dos les está ofreciendo a Uds, en vivo y a todo color, la inauguración del Santuario de Nuestro Patrón San Given, que como todos sabemos se le apareció milagrosamente a la señora Nivaria Pérez en la cocina de su casa. (85)

The broadcast describes the procession of the new regime: Msgr. Williams leads, followed by "un grupo de damas piadosas integrantes de la Legión del Pavo" including Hohenzollern –representing the archconservative monarchy and the Aryan race— and, representing the Cuban sugar aristocracy, "la Presidenta de la Legión Toto Martínez de Lamartiné, franqueada ésta por su esposo el distinguido ingeniero Jacinto Lamartiné, campeón de natación" (85). Msgr. Williams reads a papal bull consolidating the financial power of the Legion of the Turkey and officially preempts San Given's instructions for the practice of his cult, a bald power grab following the violation of Nivaria, her family, and San Given's turkey, explained away in the sanitized official version disseminated by television:

> Como Uds. sabrán, queridos televidentes, la tarea de recaudación de fondos fue iniciada por Nivaria Pérez, pero debido a la dificultad y

> magnitud de la labor, y a la espiritualidad encarnada en dicha empresa, Monsignor Williams, co-fundador de la Legión del Pavo, promulgó una bula declarando a la Legión como único órgano de recaudación. El monsignor también prohibió la recolecta en latas de melocotón, las apariciones en público de Nivaria Pérez, así como las donaciones, so pena de comunión. (85)

At this point, the religious and political plots merge. Queen Gisela shows up uninvited to the dedication ceremony with the royal family. Gisela's daughter Barbarita, designated "princess of Xawa" at the constitutional assembly (86), authorizes the official version of San Given for the younger generation and performs the ceremonial task of declaring San Given's feast day a national holiday. Barbarita's brief speech emphasizes demagogic nationalism in its opening vocative address to "the people," underscoring the infantile nature of the national story that they are being expected to accept:

> Pueblo, you know I want to tell you
> you know que mi mamá queen Gisela I
> you know has told me to tell you
> you know que el ultimo jueves de
> november you know will be declared
> un national holiday from now on.
>
> Amigos televidentes acabamos de oír de los infantes labios de la Infanta la buena nueva divulgada por tan excesa serenidad. Todos estamos seguramente regocijándonos por el nuevo día de asueto. (86)

Barbarita's vacuity and the T.V. newscaster's dishonesty, in the service of violent, elite business machinations masquerading as nation, draw a contrast to San Given's straightforward care to dispel his own myth to Nivaria. After instructing Nivaria on how to establish his cult, San Given makes direct eye contact with her and modifies the foundational myth of his own legend: T.V. San Given's famed, simultaneously Superman- and Benjamin Franklin-like rescue of a kite from a power line:

> [B|olbió ablalme y me me miró a losojo diciéndome "Tú quiere sable argo má, yo nunca desenredé un papalote del tendido eléctrico, fue una chiringa." Entonce como mihmito bino se desapareció. (77)

Adding to the transcultural heterogeneity San Given represents, he uses the Puerto Rican slang term for kite, "chiringa". Yet, by economic and military force, San Given has been easily reduced to an exclusively Cuban national symbol, no matter how his original story is divorced from how he is then symbolized, revered, and mythologized (papal bulls, national holiday, temple nave of "legitimate" English porcelain). In this way, San Given suffers a fate similar to that of other national symbols implied or mentioned in the novel: e.g., Superman, Benjamin Franklin, the Pilgrims at Plymouth Rock, Hatuey, Pocahontas, Johnny Appleseed, and Cecilia Valdés. In the overarching plot structure of *La vida es un special*, humanistic secular values –characterized by secular transculturation, common charity, hospitality, thrift, and candor— are tortured and shrunk by way of organized religion serving as a function of nationalist exile politics. Nationalist exile politics, on the other hand, serve and are only accessible to the novel's big business interests. By the

end, these are narrowed to those involved in the transnational industry of sugar production.

2.4.5 Reconstituted Aristocracies

The result in the overall scheme of *La vida es un special* is a monoculture of sugar. In the handful of vignettes set after the U.S. intervention and takeover by the Legion of the Turkey, the reader learns that, first, the "ultimate" popular hit song in the dystopian future is "Sugar People" by Alice Rod (68). Alice Rod is to perform at the "Auditorio Nacional," which likely replaces the old "Marine Auditorium." Alice Rod may also be related to Mary Rod Iwes, who opens a "fête" dancing with Pete Al Vares to the "tradicional pieza," "We All Live in a Yellow Submarine" (9). The reference to the Beatles song suggests extreme insularity, as well as unabashed Anglophilia –with racial overtones in this case—as the prevailing values among the new elite. Cuba, together with Puerto Rico, has shrunk to become a mental illness, treated at the "Sanatorio The Lone Star" (9). The weather follows the unequal social structure of the sugar economy: "En la magic city 89 grados, en la playa 88 grados y en el bello Rancho Estates 78 grados" (9). Like indentured servants in the company store, consumers seem forced to purchase products dictated by the plantation's monopolistic interests. Property owners are sold Safety Distance garage doors ("Yo solo la puedo abrir con el control remoto Safety Distance" 9); everyone else is sold Miller beer ("¡[…] más cantidad y mejor calidad!" 68). There is a report of "quince freedomfighters" sentenced by a federal judge,

suggesting a reiteration of revolutionary activity against the Legion of Turkey "military/plantation" complex similar to Fidel Castro's July 26, 1953 assault on the forces of the Batista military dictatorship at the Moncada Barracks in Santiago Cuba(68). It is unclear whether the sentence was for prison, as it was for Castro's group, or execution.

Finally, in the prologue, the novel's most distant future point, the early colonial Cuban Baroque poet Manuel de Zequeira, cast anachronistically as a twenty-first-century historian philologist, throws up his hands at the chaotic archive composing *La vida es un special*. The overall novel is presented as a found collection of documents. Zequeira demonstrates ignorance of Cuban colonial history, taking the exile aristocracy's characterization of Bartolomé de las Casas as a Communist infiltrator to be definitive and dismissing "una llamada conspiración de la escalera" as an excessive flight of fancy (7). Unable to access the historical facts, much less to construct a coherent historiographic framework within which to order and interpret the novel's rat's nest of documents, Zequeira leaves the work to the implied reader:

> A mi juicio lo más inquietante, y en este caso coincido con mi gran colega y amiga, Luisa Pérez, anida en lo referente a la desorganización estructural, y a la marcada falta de desarrollo de los personajes. En conclusión [...] opino que el valor de la obra estriba en un no sé qué, que aun no he descifrado, lo cual discutiré en próximo artículo. (7)

The prologue serves a double function. On the level of narrative, it develops the novel's future world as a terminally anti-intellectual setting, in which an intellect like Manuel de

Zequeira lacks the curiosity, imagination, and work ethic to pursue analytical investigation. On the level of the novel's framing, the prologue challenges the implied reader to (1) sort out the disorganized collection of documents, (2) imagine a reasoned interpretive frame for reading them, and (3) conduct additional research as needed in order to work on the first two tasks.

At the extradiagetic level, the prologue provides some hermeneutic signposts. For example, the juxtaposition of Las Casas and Escalera leads the reader to puzzle over possible historical, cognitive, and archival connections between the two (e.g., sugar, race, and labor). The vouched-for historicity of Las Casas' role in the novel sends the skeptical reader to find the vignette "Assembly." The portrayal of Las Casas in "Assembly" is minor and crazy, but the historicity inscribed in the carnivalesque story of the constitutional convention –i.e., Cuba's compromised independence during the period of the Platt Amendment— is posed as a challenge for the reader to interpret.

The proposition of the Escalera Conspiracy as "una ficción desorbitada" refers the reader to the sizeable body of contested historiography on the Escalera pogrom. Vidal Morales and Francisco González de Valle, for example, argue that the rumored conspiracy among Black Cubans to overthrow colonial rule of the island in a race war was a fiction made up by Spanish authorities to justify harsh methods of social control (Smith 59). Griñán Peralta corroborates this view, only he additionally blames the White Creole elites, and particularly Domingo Delmonte –who had been involved at first with the 1841-1842 Turnbull Conspiracy but had denounced it— for providing any evidence of conspiratorial activity among Black Cubans, upon which grounds Spanish authorities

substantiated their claims (Griñán Peralta 41-61). Historians Ramiro Guerra y Sánchez, Emeterio S. Santovenia, and Mario Hernández y Sánchez-Barba, in contrast, assert that "the conspiracy did exist," and José Manuel Ximeno "has gone further and hailed the conspiracy as the first major example of a secessionist movement with implications all over Cuba" (Smith 59). In the body of *La vida es un special,* the reader only finds bits and pieces of information related to Escalera. Examples include a cameo appearance by the executed mulatto poet "Plácido" Gabriel de la Concepción Valdés; Eloy's paranoid fight against the British –involving Domingo [Delmonte] and Pepe Antonio [José Antonio Saco]; the culminating clampdown by colonial authorities acting in concert with a sugar mill owner and for the benefit of Big Sugar; performances of *blanqueamiento*, suppressing Afro-Caribbean origins; and intertextual correspondences with *Cecila Valdés*.

The prologue provides a final research lead in its mention of "mi gran colega y amiga, Luisa Pérez," a transgendered reference to U.S. Cuban historian Louis A. Pérez, Jr. Pérez's work researches the problematically shared histories of the United States and Cuba, covering the Cuban wars for independence, the 1898 U.S. intervention in Cuba, and Cuba under the Platt Amendment. Collating research conducted in both U.S. and Cuban archives, Pérez builds on revisionist Cuban historiography, particularly that related to Cuban independence:

> The scholarship of Herminio Portell Vilá, Fernando Portuondo, Emilio Roig de Leuchsenring, and Enrique Gay Calbó, among others, was dedicated to the task of breaking the grip of what might easily be called

> hegemonic historiography. They sought the recognition of one truth with far-reaching political implications: Cuba was not, after all, indebted to the United States for its independence. (Pérez, *The War* 126)

At the same time, Pérez acknowledges the work of contemporary U.S. Cuban cohorts, citing the research of, among others, José B. Fernández, professor of history at the University of Central Florida and the brother of Roberto Fernández (*The War* 109). In dropping the name of "Luisa Pérez," the prologue to *La vida es un special* provides a lead not only to Pérez's original research but also to the classics of anti-colonialist, post-Platt-era Cuban historiography cited in Pérez, as well as to an emerging body of peer-reviewed revisionist U.S. Cuban historiography.

2.5 We All Live In a Yellow Submarine: Validation of Revolution in *La vida es un special* and the Areíto Group

The original reception of *La vida es un special* was, in Fernández's words, "rather negative":

> The criticism was that I was pink, people would write. I have a couple of nasty letters there; I kept a few. They would say, why do you criticize us so much, or why do you do this? Are you trying to portray the wrong image of us? (Fernández, "Roberto" 119)

The novel was published by Ediciones Universal, a Miami Cuban exile press whose catalogue was dominated at about a nine-to-one ratio by "anti-Castro novels and

memoirs" (Figueredo 19). Universal founder Julio Salvat's daughter Marta Salvat and his associate Juan Carlos Castellón explain that Universal's mission in publishing was (1) "to preserve our culture in a foreign land" and (2) to fight a war of words against socialist Cuba: "'When the military option was no longer feasible after the Bay of Pigs,' observes [...] Castellón [...], 'books became weapons' [...]" (Figueredo 19). Fernández's first novel, in contrast, presents a mosaic-like, degrading, carnivalesque portrait of the Cuban exile enclave as fractured by class warfare, racial discrimination, and hypocritical prudery and priggishness. Human relationships in the novel develop only in the cracks and crevices of the enclave– e.g., at yard sales, at after-hours factory dances, during crisis phone calls and house calls. "Our culture" is problematized at every point in the novel where characters assert it, from Linda Lucía's forced appearance at age six as a permanently tattooed, manacled human flag at a Cuban independence day parade –"Su madre se la llevó con un ataque de nervios, echando espuma por la boca" (21)—to Eloy's areito reenactments, futile exercises in "collective memory":

> --My uncle never says anything de un siboney. But he had a sugar mill y many people worked for him. He used to go a cazar con sus amigos. He had a big ranch that almost reached the sea. He told me que when he was joven, he used to fool around con todas las criadas de su casa. I'll bet he had a lot of fun. When I get older, I want to be como él. He says there's no más jamón over there.
>
> --Bueno, haremos un círculo y luego jugaremos. (34)

The notion of the foreignness of U.S. land and culture is contradicted by the novel's portrayal of U.S. and Cuban "binding familarities" predating the 1959 revolution, especially among members of the upper Cuban classes. Examples include the pre-exile Halloween party at the Tennis Club, for which Ricardito de la Espriella dresses up as Batman (19), and the showy use of English loan words in society page write-ups –e.g., "Fue abierto el 'event' al compás del 'traditional' vals" (26). Such "binding familiarities" have been documented at length by Louis Pérez in studies such as *On Becoming Cuban: Identity, Nationality and Culture* as well as in *Ties of Singular Intimacy*. Regarding the appropiation of elements of U.S. culture as signifiers of "prestige and privilege" in Republican Cuba, for example, Pérez writes:

> Usage implied prestige and privilege, which were associated with such residential zones as Reparto Biltmore, Country Club Park, and Reparto Lawton, as well as social standing, like belonging to –always written in English—"el Big Five de La Habana" [...]. Participation in this world was to be part of "la jai," as in "high life" (Pérez, *On Becoming* 375)

In 1955 Fin de Siglo proclaimed itself "the first to offer its children collections inspired by the image of the North American hero, Davy Crockett, "king of the wild frontier" [...]. Casa Vasallo advertised a "Dick Tracey Wrist Radio," and Casa Cofiño marketed a "Highway Patrol" model car and a Robin Hood outfit, "an exact replica used by North American film and television star Richard Greene." Fin de Siglo also promoted a Superman suit, with pants, shirt, cape, belt, and "a certificate ratifying membership in the Superman Club" (365). Regarding English loan words in the society pages, Pérez writes

that, “English had become the principal mode for representing the social world of the Cuban middle class,” a statement supported by his survey of column headings for social news in *El Mundo* and *Diario de la Marina* between 1950 and 1958, e.g., “*Birthday party* ayer,” “Fiesta de *teen agers* [sic] en el Country Club,” and “La *maid of honor* llevaba un precioso vestido” (373).

On the other hand, the novel’s two instances of implied criticism of socialist Cuba in *La vida es un special* are incidental and mild, to say the least. Nivaria mentions that she emigrated to the United States early on due to her difficult financial straits on the island (“[...] vine pacá mucho ante polque el cable que me comía ayá se ehtaba bolviendo el electric company” 53). In context, Nivaria is making the point that she is worse off economically and socially in South Florida: “Y me tumban mi pesito semanal hace doce año, tuelv year jony [...]. [C]uando uhtede se ehtaban echando frehco donde tú sabe, ya yo me la ehtaba puliendo aquí. [....] Si ganan a mí me van a decil vvaya pol la puelta de atráss” (53). Likewise, a recently-arrived Cuban émigré tells celebrity radio host El Ciudadano that he had been craving ham in socialist Cuba but hadn’t been able to get any. The joke is on El Ciudadano, who has been trying desperately to put ideological clichés in his interlocutor’s mouth:

> --Dígame, ¿por qué abandanó aquello?
>
> --Pues, yo tenía una prima aquí y yo ...
>
> --Esas ansias que usted ansiaba la ha logrado hace apenas dos semanas y se ve que ha adquirido nuevos colores respirando aire de libertad.

--Bueno, pues usted verá, yo tenía una prima aquí y yo le dije que si algún día...

--El que ha sufrido la falta de libertad, queridos radioyentes, hoy la respira y se siente libre y canta a la libertad.

--¿Y qué otras palabras quisiera decir a los radioescuchas?

--Bueno, pues, usted verá, yo tenía una prima aquí y yo le dije que si algún día. Bueno señor pa' serle sincero yo vine pa' comer jamón. Sí yo quiero declarar al público que el jamón planchado siempre me ha gustado mucho. Y por eso vine.

--¿Y la libertad es importante también? ¿Verdad?

--Sí eso es importante y el jamón planchado también. (50)

On the other hand, there is implicit acknowledgement in *La vida es un special* of the 1959 revolution as justified, irreversible, and consequential in Cuba's national history. A key example is in the vignette titled "Academy," in which the anti-castrista attitude and pedagogical slant of nonrecognition of the Cuban Revolution, i.e., writing off the decades of post-1959 Cuban history as aberrant and not to be counted, are lampooned in a history class session run by a defensively rigid schoolteacher. The teacher in "Academy" is the type who would be lost without an answer key, and she works out of a hyperbolically out-of-date textbook. The class is not allowed to discuss any event postdating the 1933 Sergeants' Revolt, the toppling of the baldly unconstitutional and corrupt, pro-United States Céspedes government (Pérez, *Cuba* 266). Beyond the teacher's discursive limit is the reformist pro-labor, anti-colonialist executive government

of Grau San Martín that followed the Sergeants' Revolt, instituting such changes in Cuba as the establishment of the eight-hour workday, worker's compensation, a minimum wage for sugar cane cutters, women's suffrage, and autonomy for the university (267-68). Not the least of the reforms elided by the teacher's lesson is Grau's unilateral abrogation of the Platt Amendment (268). The teacher in "Academy," representing the community's formal gatekeeper of historical discourse, performs a miniature reversal of the Grau-era academic reforms protecting scholarly inquiry, as she shuts down all talk but that of colonial and Platt Amendment-era Cuban history. Permissible discussion is limited to 1902-1933-vintage official Cuban independence history, adhering to the conventional wisdom of U.S. official discourse and historiography (Smith 67-68, Pérez, *The War* 36-53):

> --[...] Continúamos. La colonia casi duró cuatrocientos años y la república se inauguró después de la colonia. El establecimiento de la república se lo debemos y agradecemos a nuestro buen vecino.
>
> --¿Canadá?, maestra
>
> --¿Y hasta cuándo duró la república?
>
> --¿Cómo que hasta cuándo duró?
>
> --¿No se acabó, maestra? [....]
>
> --Pues es otra calumnia. La república sigue funcionando perfectamente con sus dos cámaras, su poder judicial y el poder ejecutivo. El poder ejecutivo es elegido por voto popular. El mejor ejecutivo fue nuestro

> primer presidente, dechado de honradez. Fue tan honrado que devolvió un reloj que le habían obsequiado durante su mandato.
>
> --Entonces, ¿qué fue la revolución?
>
> --¿A cuál te refieres, a la de la independencia o a la de treinta y un años después? (45)

The passage underscores the discursive connection between U.S. agency in actualizing Cuba's independence, generating in turn a constructed absence of Cuban political capacities, and the expectation of an unequally advantageous "special relationship" on the basis of Cuban gratitude ("El establecimiento de la república se lo debemos y agradecemos a nuestro buen vecino."). These are major tropes of U.S. public discourse justifying self-dealing, military occupation, and neocolonial foreign policy following the 1898 intervention (Pérez, "Incurring" 365-74, *The War* 124). While reinforced by the chronological narratives that dominated transitional Cuban independence historiography through the 1920s (Pérez, "Incurring" 387), the pro-intervention tropes are examined and taken apart in the works of revisionist, materialist analysis published by subsequent generations of Cuban historians e.g., Roig de Leuchsenring's *Cuba no debe su independencia a los Estados Unidos* (1950) and Portell Vilá's four-volume *Historia de Cuba en sus relaciones con los Estados Unidos y España* (1938-41), based on "a great deal of original research in archival and manuscript collections in the United States":

> The major thesis of this work was that annexation was the ulterior aim of the United States policy toward Cuba throughout the nineteenth century.

> This policy, [Portell Vilá] maintained, was responsible for Cuba's failure to achieve independence during the century. [....] Distortions and errors did exist in this work, but it has, in varying degrees, influenced almost everything written by Cubans on this subject since 1938. (Smith 62)

Such "revisionist counternarrative," substantiated by the production of a formidable body of new historiographic research in Cuba over the 1940s and 1950s, provides the grounds for justification of the 1959 Cuban revolution (Pérez, *The War* 125-29):

> The year 1898, Cubans understood, was the point of preemption; 1959, they believed, was the moment of redemption. One of the objectives of the revolution was to make Cuba for Cubans, and this necessarily had to begin with history, to recover a usable past in which the Cuban presence mattered. (Pérez, *The War* 131)

La vida es un special ties the teacher's willful cluelessness –she chides Linda Lucía for observing that the class is in the United States and not in Cuba ("Y no lo repitas más que confundes a tus condiscípulos" 45)—and surrealistically antiquated views in "Academy" to the affirmation of U.S. intervention and owed Cuban gratitude for the establishment of the Cuban republic. In doing so, and in relating that affirmation to the teacher's nonrecognition of the 1959 Cuban revolution, the "Academy" episode implicitly makes denial of the Revolution's place in Cuba's independence history seem intransigent and silly. Such a biased practice of denial is documented in the testimony of some second-generation U.S. Cuban exiles:

> Mientras más uno leía y observaba, más se daba cuenta de las diferencias entre lo que [tanto mi familia como el exilio en general] decían y lo que uno podía entrever. [....] Tantos mentiras nos dijeron que era inevitable que, en un momento dado, esas mentiras se revelaran como tales y nos dejaran ver claramente la realidad y aun, las raíces del "error". Yo me decía, por ejemplo: si la Revolución no tiene el apoyo del pueblo, ¿cómo se puede mantener en el poder? Y, por ahí, llegué a la conclusión de que el pueblo cubano apoyaba la Revolución. (Grupo Areíto 49)

The allusions to the Revolution of 1933 further suggests an analogy with the 1959 revolution with the latter as a logical and justified consequence of the unconstitutional, corrupt U.S.-supported Batista regime and the former as an appropriate corrective to the Machado dictatorship (1930-33). Finally, the grim future created by the novel's Cuban exile leadership –following a reiteration of the 1898 U.S. intervention in the fictional war over San Given—results in a sympathetic July Twenty-Sixth-style uprisings of "freedomfighters" (68). Overall, the limited allusions to the 1959 Cuban revolution in *La vida es un special* have less in common with Universal's anti-Castro agenda, per Castañón, than with the sympathetic stance and inquisitive purpose professed by the Areíto Group:

> Simpatizamos con la lucha que derrocó en 1959 un régimen de corrupción y tiranía. [....] *Areíto* se propone llegar a aquellos individuos que comparten nuestras inquietudes y así emprender un nuevo camino de

> reflexión sobre nuestra situación como exilio y la de Cuba en revolución. ("Areíto")

Indeed, Fernández participated in *Areíto* from the journal's first year. He is acknowledged for providing "financial and/or moral support" in the fourth issue of the journal's first volume (1974) and contributes the short story "La llamada" in 2.2-3 (1975) as well as a fragment of *La vida es un special* in 9.36 (1984). Other *Areíto* collaborators whose influence can be detected in Fernández's writing and teaching include co-founder Lourdes Casal, Louis A. Pérez, Roberto González Echevarría, Lisandro Pérez, Eliana Rivero, Dolores Prida, José Kozer, Alan West-Durán, Sylvia Pedraza Bailey, Antonio Benítez Rojo, and Senel Paz. As the journal developed, it expanded to cover topics outside of the field of Cuban studies, featuring the work of such contributors as Puerto Rican writer Ana Lydia Vega, U.S. Haitian exile poet Paul Laraque, U.S. Guatemalan writer Arturo Arias, and Argentine-born anthropologist Nestor García Canclini. What these writers' publications in *Areíto* share in common is an approach geared to analytical investigation rather than the performance of ideological solidarity. Fernández recalls that it was during the period that he participated in and followed *Areíto* that he developed an "obsession" with Carpentier – the journal featured González Echevarría's analysis and reviews of Carpentier's late-period work in several issues, along with a review by Marifeli Pérez-Stable of González Echevarría's *Alejo Carpentier: The Pilgrim at Home*—and an appreciation for Lourdes Casal's Cabrera Infante-influenced fiction, which, together with frequent readings of Kurt Vonnegut's fiction, Fernández cites as his main reading material during the time that he was preparing *La vida es un special*

(Telephone interview). Fellow *Areíto* contributor Louis A. Pérez is also featured prominently in the novel, as mentioned above, and so is Ediciones Universal heavyweight and non-*Areíto*-related writer José Sánchez Boudy.

2.6 Criticism of Cuban Exile Literature in Fernández's Doctoral Dissertation

Fernández's 1977 Florida State University doctoral dissertation, *El cuento del exilio cubano: un enfoque,* regarding the development of Cuban exile short fiction, is critical of the continued dominance of the genre by (1) ideologically propagandistic, anti-revolutionary fiction and (2) inward- and backward-looking nostalgic fiction. Fernández negatively assesses the fiction of political denouncement –typically written in the epic mode, for example in the service of a stoic exile identity organized around the theme of betrayal, often in the heat of battle or crisis (Fernández, "El cuento" 17)—for limited thematic and stylistic range, as well as for racist overtones in the stories that portray Afro-Cubans as opportunistic traitors (20-29). The nostalgic vein is criticized for tending to present either an infantilizing view of the island –i.e., mixing up nostalgia for Cuba with a yearning for childhood (64-65)—or for dishonest erasure of political, racial, and class conflict in pre-revolutionary Cuba (76). The most promising vein of Cuban exile fiction, according to the scheme of the dissertation, is that written in an abstract, psychological vein, in the tradition of Alfonso Hernández Catá (90-118). Fernández favorably cites short story collections by then-Hawaii resident Matías Montes Huidobro, Madrid-based Carlos Alberto Montaner, and North Carolina professor Sánchez-Boudy,

asserting that there is a greater freedom of expression, and a better possibility for producing fiction outside the paradigm of identity history, away from normative culture of the Miami Cuban exile:

> Los escritores radicados en Miami se encuentran guiados a realizar su producción dentro de un marco de carácter político o nostálgico, donde la problemática cubana sea el eje de la misma. Recurrir a otro curso de expresión sería quizá tomado como una desviación de la causa del exilio. (118)

The dissertation's concluding reflections on the prospects for Cuban exile fiction, though, are generally pessimistic. Fernández dreads the encroachment of English into the work by Cuban exile writers, which he observes as grafted onto the still dominant fictional tendencies of political exile lament or nostalgic pining. Such encroachment happens regardless of the writer's generation, rather corresponding to the writer's geographic proximity to Miami (155). Fernández predicts that Cuban exile fiction will be subsumed as an ideologically readily assimilable English-language sub-genre of U.S. ethnic literature but expresses restrained hope for cultural and literary rapprochement between Cuban and Cuban exile writers:

> Tomando un punto de vista menos negativo, pudiera ocurrir con el tiempo un acercamiento cultural entre el exilio cubano y Cuba. En este caso, la literatura cubana del exilio se volverá a entroncar con la literatura cubana. Esta alternativa aunque posible es poco probable. (155)

2.7 Discourse, Historicity, and Bargain Shopping: Corrective Parody of *Lilayando* in *La vida es un special*

Prior to *La vida es un special*, other uncharacteristic, non-militant titles disconnected from exile politics published by Universal include Celedonio González's novels *Los primos* (1971) and *Los cuatro embajadores* (1973), noted for having "changed the focus from the Marxist homeland to concentrate on Cuban life and culture in the United States" and for introducing "a very taboo topic among Cuban exiles: criticism of the U.S. economic system, especially in its exploitation of Cuban workers" (Kanellos, *Hispanic Literature* 182). Lourdes Casal's *Los fundadores: Alfonso y otros cuentos* (1973) was also issued by Universal, about which Rivero writes that "Casal's reader finds [...] allusions to a complex web of readings, and notices an American cultural presence in which, nevertheless, Cuban/Hispanic elements are basic to an understanding of the totality of the text" (Rivero 171). Finally, Matías Montes Huidobro's oneiric *Segar a los muertos: novela* (1980) carries the Universal imprint.

What sets *La vida es un special* apart among this select group of literary misfits is that, first, the novel interweaves the surface-level "polyphonic," "heterogeneous" portrait of a chaotic and conflictive U.S. Cuban ethnic community "boiling over" (Febles, "Polifonía" 55-60, Irizarry 595) with a below-the-surface deep structure of revisionist Cuban independence historiography. This occult but amply hinted-at structural framework gives the novel coherent narrative shape on another level than that of deconstruction –according to the postmodernist interpretation of Irizarry (596)— or

mosaic-like, carnivalesque community portrait of "émigré neurosis"—"una galería de tipos pintorescos, víctimas en su mayor parte de la neurosis del emigrado" (Febles, Rev. 315). *La vida es un special* further performs this dual structure, I will argue, departing from a competitive parody of Sánchez-Boudy's *Lilayando* (1971). *Lilayando* is a much-commented work of Cuban exile fiction that styles itself tongue-in-cheek as a freewheeling "antinovela" but closely serves both of Universal's stated missions to "preserve our culture in a foreign land" and to imagine that "books became weapons" for firing textual broadsides against socialist Cuba, for consumption by Cuban exile readers.

Lilayando owes its fame to first to Seymour Menton's relatively favorable write-up in *Prose Fiction of the Cuban Revolution.* Sánchez-Boudy's short novel stands out against the other works of Cuban exile prose fiction covered by Menton, which the critic finds turgid, pretentious affairs:

> Far less pretentious [...] Sánchez-Boudy's *Lilayando* is a very shortened Miami version of *Tres tristes tigres.* With no plot and even less character development than in Cabrera Infante's novel, Sánchez-Boudy has strung together a delightful series of loosely related anonymous dialogues in the picturesque vernacular of the Cuban exiles in Miami. Although language is definitely the protagonist, with the emphasis on puns, the contents of the dialogues –social gossip and problems of acculturation—do provide sociological insight into the character of the speakers and the society in which they live. (Menton 229)

According to Naomi Lindstrom, with *Lilayando,* Sánchez-Boudy "moves toward a more literary form of Cuban exile writing. Menton [...] sees him as capable of making Cuban exile literature aesthetically satisfying to a larger readership" (226).

Sánchez-Boudy, on the other hand, describes *Lilayando* as a project of folklore, in line with Mañach's *Indagación del choteo* and of a piece with his own dictionaries of Cubanisms:

> Jorge Mañach escribió un libro sobre el tema del choteo, tratando de definirlo. [....] Pues bien, en este volumen hemos tratado, no sólo con los ejemplos que damos, en forma de oración, de cada cubanismo, sino con los sinónimos, además del cubanismo en sí, de mostrar lo que es el choteo. En ello no hemos hecho más que seguir lo que se encuentra en otros libros nuestros: dos antinovelas: *Lilayando* [...] y en *Lilayando pal tu.* (Sánchez-Boudy, *Diccionario* 8)

Sánchez-Boudy's *Diccionario Mayor* defines "lilayar" as "Hablar cosas insustanciales. 'Ustedes se pasan la vida lilayando.'" (401). This is Sánchez-Boudy's complaint in his book *La nueva novela hispanoamericana y Tres tristes tigres* against the acclaim enjoyed by Cabrera Infante's novel: Sánchez-Boudy sees *Tres tristes tigres* as simply an entertaining work of linguistic folklore, with no meaning behind it but that critics have blown out of proportion. Sánchez-Boudy's specific complaint is against what he calls "el *'snobismo'* izquierdista [que] mueve a los críticos y seudo críticos sobre cualquier motivación" (Sánchez-Boudy, "La novela" 69). The prologue to *Lilayando,* credited to a made-up amalgam between Jean-Paul Sartre's name and the Spanish word for dry cleaner

(Jean Paul Tintorero), in essence states what Sánchez-Boudy writes about the novel in his *Diccionario Mayor*, and how he argues that *Tres tristes tigres* should be read in *La nueva narrativa y Tres tristes tigres:*

> El título de la narrativa: *Lilayando,* indica lo que ésta es: una serie de conversaciones llenas de picardía y escritas en el peculiar gracejo de las clases cubanas más modestas, pero insustanciales en sí, que no dicen nada. [....] Nosotros creemos que la gracia del cubano, su innata tendencia para el chiste, están en esta obra. Nos parece que son una muestra fiel del choteo y del relajo criollo. (4)

The message is that this is folklore, not Sánchez-Boudy's literary work. For "literature" by Sánchez-Boudy, there are the weighty novels about big themes to which Sánchez-Boudy refers as his "crisis novels": *Los cruzados de la aurora* (1972), *Orbus terrarum. La ciudad de humanitas* (1974), and *Los sarracenos del ocaso* (1977), "which deal with the conflict between good and evil in the world" (Suárez 418). Those are the ambitious novels, in fact, that Sánchez-Boudy cites to counter Chilean-Cuban critic Alberto Baeza Flores' evaluation of Cuban exile prose fiction as "novela-ensayo político" (Sánchez-Boudy, "La novela" 63-64), even though *Lilayando* would have better supported his argument.

Likewise, in his study on Carpentier, Sánchez-Boudy equates literary merit with grand, abstract ideas. According to Sánchez-Boudy, *El reino de este mundo,* for example, is a philosophical thesis novel in which the character of Henri Christophe illustrates the existentialist philosophy of Heidegger: "Para [Christophe] el hombre crea

su propio mundo" (*La temática* 89). Sánchez-Boudy categorically insists that *El reino de este mundo* is not a historical novel:

> Novela, pues, de tesis y no histórica. Novela de tesis filosófica, en la que se plantea que la libertad no existe y que el hombre es el creador de sí mismo. La crítica, pues, al considerarla novela histórica anda por caminos errados, por andurriales. Los verdaderos artistas, los hombres que escriben imbuidos de una preocupación literaria, filosófica o metafísica, etc., no ponen los títulos en balde. [....] Esas palabras, y esa tesis de Carpentier no se compaginan, en manera alguna, con el marxismo que él afirma profesar hoy [...]. (88)

Elsewhere in the study, Sánchez-Boudy defines the Cubanness of Carpentier's work in terms of the Spanish cultural heritage:

> El carácter del cubano, por condiciones sociológicas que no son de estudiar aquí se caracteriza por un enorme afán de perfección formal. Busca siempre lo prístino de la cosa. Es una fase idealista que heredó de España [...]. (36)

Sánchez-Boudy's distinctions between high and low registers of expression, e.g., between literature and history –a dichotomy that goes back to Aristotle's Poetics—and between serious and frivolous art, i.e., the contrast Sánchez-Boudy posits between his views of Carpentier and Cabrera Infante and between his own "novels of crisis" and his folkloric works of "relajo criollo"— extend to his view of Cuban Spanish. In the prologue to his *Mayor Diccionario,* Sánchez-Boudy writes about how the lower "niveles

del habla cubana" reflect deteriorating degrees of sociolinguistic "descomposición" and "chusmería" (13). At the first level below "castizo," or pure, Spanish, according to Sánchez-Boudy, is Spanish colored with "normal" local slang expressions—e.g., "chévere," "estar de farolero," "con la velocidad del rayo" (13). Sánchez-Boudy characterizes the next level of "decomposed," "low-life" Spanish by the use of English loan words and humorously coarse expressions : that have an implication of racial difference

> "Mi hermano Pedro, estoy [...] de comparsero de los buenos. Hoy voy a pedir a Lola para caer de flai en el himeneo enseguida. [....] Mi hermano Pedro, estoy que ya tú sabe, negro, de farolito chino. Figúrate que hoy voy a tallar con el padre de Lola para con el consentimiento del ocambo caer con ella en San José del Lago." (13)

The lowest level of Cuban Spanish, according to Sánchez-Boudy, is the speech of the "chuchero," who, as Sánchez-Boudy explains, was a 1940s-era thug type belonging to the lowest social class who smoked marihuana, dressed like a bebopper, and practiced santería: "en otras palabras, era adicto a una de las religiones africanas que llevadas a Cuba por los esclavos se asentaron en ella" (9). Chuchero speech for Sánchez-Boudy incorporates more Afro-Cuban elements as well as a Spanish discourse completely overrun by the elements of the first two levels of "decomposition." It is a clichéd speech –based on outdated stereotypes— that would be difficult to imagine outside of the old newspaper comics "Zigzag" and "El Chuchero Catalino" cited by Sánchez-Boudy:

> "Mi hermano, estoy [...] de Marte y Belona con la Orquesta de los Palau. Hoy le parlo barín al puro de Lola la jevita mía pa' que con la venia el socio la tire de flai en Varadero y le caiga arriba nagüe con la bendición de la minfa de ella". (13)

This "Joycean gibberish" is where *Lilayando* is coming from (Sánchez-Boudy, *Diccionario* 8).

According to Santiago García, following Cuban exile writer René Landa Triolet, Sánchez-Boudy's play with *choteo* serves an anesthetic purpose: to give the Cuban exile reader something to laugh about to keep from crying, the reason for *Lilayando*'s existence. For García and Triolet, the humor of *Lilayando* and *Lilayando pal tu* serves the purpose of "sweetening" the "national tragedy" of Cuban exile and "the crisis of the Cuban nation":

> En ellos vemos que el choteo es una faceta fija e inconmivible de la psiquis del cubano y que consiste en enfocar, mediante el chiste, las más disímiles situaciones de la tragedia nacional. No se trata pues de desvalorizar sino de endulzar, por lo menos, la crisis de la nación cubana. (García 137)

García and Landa Triolet's tragic view is borne out by *Lilayando*'s concluding lines, a metanarrative commentary on Cuban exile suffering that sets up a simile between the open-ended pointlessness of *Lilayando* and that of life in exile:

> --Negra, ¿te recojo para ir a la modista?

--Sí, vieja. Acabo ahora mismo de cerrar esa novela que vende Salvat llamada *Lilayando*.

--¿Qué te pareció?

--¿A mí? Que se le pueden añadir miles de páginas y hacer una novela infinita, de nunca acabar.

--Entonces es como esta vida nuestra aquí en los "Yunait": de nunca acabar. (80)

The punchline of *Lilayando* is that the "antinovel" is a waste of time like exile. *Lilayando* is outside the flow of legitimate art as exile is outside the flow of Cuban history.

Lilayando's structure, mockingly aping the structure of *Tres tristes tigres*, and which *La vida es un special* imitates in partical vindication of Cabrera Infante's narrative method, reinforces the novel's portrait of "inauthentic" but amusing wheel-spinning at the community level among Cuban exiles. *Lilayando* presents eighty-four vignettes in eighty pages, including dialogues, advice letters, satirical poems, dirty jokes, and fragments of a soap opera. The novel's dialogue applies the elements of Spanish-language "decomposition" that Sánchez-Boudy lays out in the *Diccionario Mayor* in ways that are supposed to provoke laughter. The humor is mocking, which García contends makes it authentically Cuban: "se observa esa característica nacional que consiste en burlarse de alguien o de algo en forma maliciosa" (132). What's more, the laughter comes exclusively at the expense of the lower-class Cubans ("las clases cubanas más modestas" 4), and carries a conspicuously racist streak. For example, during a

bargain shopping trip, two idle, dim consumers talk about their knowledge of Santería, the syncretic Cuban religious practice merging elements of Catholicism and West African traditions of orisha voudou. Their caricatured "wisdom" is made fun of by way of framing racist stereotypes regarding sex and rude bodily behavior. The passage devaluates Afro-descendant cultural heritage by reducing it to self-serving gossip, and caps off this devaluation with a pointedly-placed instance on Afro-Caribbean /l/-/r/ substitution. The background of the conversation is that the shoppers have been smelling flatus and blaming each other for it, while gossipping about santería:

> --Dilo, chica: el peo. Estamos en confianza.
>
> --Muchacha, quién te dice a ti que llego a la casa y la sorprendo con tremendo tabaco en la boca y echando humo. Fumándole al santo.
>
> --Y ¿cómo tú lo sabes? Tú también comes de eso.
>
> [....]
>
> --Muchacha, y que en la brujería todo entra por la boca.
>
> --De eso nada, de eso cero. La vecina de al lado de mi casa, que es hija de Changó, le metió un amarre al marido que no se le va. [....] Fíjate si el tipo la quiere que tienen diez años de casados y el hombre dice que la lleva de contén a contén y de rama en rama como Tarzán lleva a Juana.
>
> [....]
>
> Oye, tú sabes mucho de eso.
>
> --Es que yo me leí "El Monte", de Lydia Cabrera [...].

--¡Chica! ¿Tú lees a Lydia? ¡Qué curta eres! (Sánchez-Boudy, *Lilayando* 14-15).

By contrast, the passages of dense, graphically-represented Afro-Caribbean speech in *La vida es un special*, especially those pertaining to Nivaria Pérez, are developed with respect for the character's dignity and to present key expository and interpretive information. For example, readers fluent only in "castizo" Spanish must struggle to register Nivaria's testimonial information on Sylvia González de la Espriella (10-11, 15, 28-29), the inside account of the Legion of the Turkey's takeover of the San Given cult (88), and her own compelling story (53, 57, 68-69, 77, 88). In a scene that helps readers recognize Nivaria's intellectual acumen and orient expectations accordingly, she single-handedly solves a court case in the self-contained episode "Caso número quinientos cincuenta y cinco" (64-67): "[S]e pasan la bida en casa de esa señora cuando el marío ehta trabajando elobeltain. [....] Mire señol juez si ud. me pregunta a mí yo diría que ese Don Goyo lo mataron pol celo y san sacabó" (66). In a similar light, in a key moment in the development of Sylvia González de la Espriella's character, the reader finds out that she has been regularly consulting with a *santero* (60). This information appears in an episode titled "Alpiste" ("bird seed"), with imagery and title reference related to Fernando Ortiz's memorable phrase "aves de paso" ("migratory birds") to illustrate the transitory, densely interwoven, and provisional bases of Cuban culture, of which diasporic Afro-Caribbean roots are a key constitutive part, in *Contrapunteo cubano del tabaco y el azúcar*:

> No hubo factores humanos más trascendentes para la cubanidad que esas continuas, radicales y contrastantes transmigraciones geográficas, económicas y sociales de los pobladores; que esa perenne transitoriedad de los propósitos y que esa vida siempre en desarraigo en la tierra habitada, siempre en desajuste con la sociedad sustentadora. Hombres, economías, culturas y anhelos, todo aquí se sintió foráneo, provisional, cambiadizo, "aves de paso" sobre el país, a su costa, a su contra y a su malgrado. (Ortiz 258)

Participation in U.S. consumer culture, which is ridiculed and feminized across the board in *Lilayando* (e.g., 12, 15, 28, 50-51), is presented in *La vida es un special* as an activity that may be approached with agency to a variety of ends. Different forms of participation in the "specials" of *La vida es un special* include creative acts of transculturation (e.g., the construction of San Given's offering plate from a can of peaches in syrup, 77) and social mixing across boundaries of class and race (e.g., the González de la Espriella couple's attendance of after-hours factory dances 50). Specials are also taken advantage of for feeding a family on a tight budget (57) and "faitin el infleichon" (69). This positive representation of pragmatic consumerism is in contrast to *Lilayando*'s misanthropic portrayal of bargain shopping as a lowlife pastime centered around sticking it to "estos judíos [que] son la candela y te tumban" (Sánchez-Boudy, *Lilayando* 15). On the side of "la inautenticidad" (Sánchez-Boudy, *Lilayando* 4), specials in *La vida es un special* are used for enabling neurotically defensive Cuban exile compulsions (e.g., Ricardito purchasing sale items to decorate for Eloy's bedroom areítos

and bathtub Varadero, Fernández, *La vida* 87). Sánchez-Boudy presents Cuban exile consumerist life and idle conversation (*lilayando*) in Miami, particularly among the lower classes, as "inauthentic" because it denies and postpones indefinitely the political exile agenda of restoration in Cuba (*Lilayando* 80). In *La vida,* it is the exile fixation on restoration of the past order in Cuba that prevents the development of the community at hand in good faith. Bargains also figure into the elite Cuban exile Creole class selling out "las clases cubanas más modestas" (Sánchez-Boudy, *Lilayando* 4), along with national sovereignty, for an unequal portion of wealth and power (Fernández, *La vida* 83-84, 91). The latter instance of "inauthenticity" presents a replay of Cuba's independence history between 1842 and 1933 along the lines of the argument developed in Griñán Peralta's *Ensayos y conferencias,* a major source text for *La vida es un special,* as we will examine shortly, in the last section of this chapter.

Similarities and pointed differences can be detected between the formal structure and stated purpose of *Lilayando*'s prologue, Sánchez-Boudy's style of literary criticism, and the prologue opening *La vida es un special.* Graphically, the prologue of *La vida es un special* resembles that of *Lilayando* closely. Both comprise three brief paragraphs, headed by the title "PRÓLOGO," which is centered above the text, and signed by fictional names left-justified below the text. The name of the fictional prologuist in *Lilayando* –Jean Paul Tintorero—pokes fun at "el *'snobismo'* izquierdista [que] mueve a los críticos y seudo críticos sobre cualquier motivación" (Sánchez-Boudy, "La novela" 69) in that the calque simultaneously takes a swipe at a common Tintorero (dry cleaner) who might presume to comment on literature –i.e., to mistake low-class "lilayando" for

literature—and at Jean Paul Sartre. Sartre was a well-known early supporter of the Cuban Revolution, an advocate of politically-engaged literature, and an important contributor to the critical body of writing on Negritude.

In "Orphée nègre," Sartre's introductory essay to Senghor's *Anthologie de la nouvelle poésie nègre et malgache de langue française* (1948), Sartre posits that there are two different manifestations of negritude. Sartre calls the first, which is in line with the work of Afro-Caribbean writers like Franz Fanon and Jacques Roumain, subjective negritude. Sartre explains this as black existential awareness based on the historical reality of a social situation because of race. The second, so-called objective negritude, exemplified by Senegalese statesman Leopold Senghor's writings in *Liberté* I-III, is concerned with identifying the innate characteristics, or the essence, of African personality and cultural expression. Sartre's paradigm of Negritude, favoring the subjective, anti-colonialist manifestation of black consciousness, is likely part of the reason that Sánchez-Boudy, a self-styled expert in Afro-Cuban culture, lampoons "Jean Paul."

On the contrary, *La vida es un special* develops a poetics based on Ortiz's model of transculturation, positing Afro-Caribbean roots as constitutive rather than external to the entire community, from the seasonal sugarcane field worker Gilberto Pérez to sugar mogul and champion swimmer Jacinto Lamartiné. The main questions here are not essentialist; they ask, rather, to what degree the members of the community suppress or deny those roots and to what extent the characters are aware of them. With regard to the first question, Sylvia González de la Espriella gradually slips out of her affected "castizo"

Spanish accent, characterized by exaggerated /ss/ and /vv/, as her character develops from a pretentious bigot in early post-Revolution Cuba –e.g., "[Q]uería señalarte que tu criadita nuevva ess algo desscaradita y falta de educación. Imagínate que tuvvo la ossadía de tocar por la puerta principal" (19)—to a more sympathetic and honest character. As Sylvia acknowledges and becomes comfortable with her actual modest, working middle-class position, she changes her dialect along with her social habits and personal political choices:

> --Quería invitarte a un almuerzo auspiciado por la Legión del Pavo a beneficio del dispensario de la iglesia de Monsignor Williams.
>
> --Qué va Toto. Si lo único que hago es mirar un poco las novelas y escribir a Kika [en Cuba]. Los week-enes, si no hay over-time, vamos siempre al baile de la factoría.
>
> --¿Tú vas a eso? ¿No pensé que alternaras con es gente! ¡Con ese elemento!
>
> --Toto, yo soy de ese elemento, ¿comprendes? (51)

Ironically, sugar mogul Jacinto Lamartiné, one of the chief engineers behind the novel's culminating pogrom carried out in the name of suppressing the so-called Cecilia Valdés conpiracy, doesn't speak but thinks in an Afro-Caribbean-inflected Spanish:

> Si acaso, muy de tarde en tarde con los del Country [Club], aunque ni allá me llevaba bien con elloh. [....] A partir del año que viene, vamoh a empezar a recaudar pa' empezar uno más exclusivo. (37)

The accent and inflexions used in Lamartiné's interior monologue are not "pure" (*castizo*) but more typical of working-class Afro-Cubans. This is followed in Jacinto's stream-of-consciousness train of thought by his disparaging mental note on the Afro-descendant background of an associate's son-in-law:

> Hay gente y hay gentecita. [....] Mírame a la hija de Felipón –de una familia excelente, del registro—, se enamoró de un tal Ramírez de sabrá el diablo de dónde viene. Para mí, hasta medio mulato es. Felipón no me dijo ni media palabra, el pobre, estaba destruido. La suerte que viven por North Dakota. De lo contrario, hasta habría que darle entrada en el club. (37)

2.8 Documenting the Occult: Santería as Archive and the Esu, Griñán Peralta, and Sarduy Subtexts in *La vida es un special*

Archival dissonances are developed within the communitarian acts of historical reenactment attempted by the character Eloy de los Reyes, who, in *La vida es un special*, appears as a closeted recluse obsessed with national Cuban "collective memory" but plagued by ignorance and problems with memory recall. Eloy appears in different forms in Fernández's subsequent novels *La montaña rusa* (as an old man who projects a film of a Tropicana-like Havana night club on the wall next to his bathtub Varadero) and *Raining Backwards* (as a teenage boy who bathes a lonely, late-middle-aged woman named Mirta in exchange for stories about Cuba). In *La vida es un special*, his age is ambiguous. As a

recurrent character, he is as important as Nivaria in Fernández's fictional canon. In *La vida,* his attempts to curate educational historical reenactments as social events go awry, as archival subtexts (including as sources Griñán Peralta's revisionist historical essay "La defensa de los esclavos," Severo Sarduy's critical and creative literary production, and the archive of orisha voudou) phantasmagorically encroach on Eloy's life.

First, the novel places conspicuous hints that Eloy de los Reyes, is partly, and unbeknownst to him, a manifestation or personification of the major Yoruban orisha Esu, known in Santería as Eshu or Elegguá, in voudou as Legba, and in Candomblé as Exu. Esu mythology centers on a divine trickster who represents the intersection of earthly and divine realms, as well as a juncture between childlike mischief and adult resourcefulness and potency. In general, he represents duality, transitive processes, and shrewd improvisation (Aróstegui 36-39). In the reader's first view of Eloy, he is up at the crack of dawn arranging fruits in his room –coconuts, pineapples, mangos, and avocados, in that order. He laments not having any mameyes. He fashions a headdress from six feathers he takes out of his closet, actually inserting the quills into his scalp ("[S]in darse cuenta se arrancó una pluma y le salió sangre," 14). He puts another coconut in place and does a little dance. He panics as he tries in vain to remember the words to Felix Caignet's *pregón*-derived popular hit song "Frutas del Caney," the tune he hums as he dances. A *pregón* is a song sung by a street vendor to advertise his or her wares. Eloy then abruptly switches gears and walks to Primitivo's grocery, where he buys three boxes of dye, two packets of volcanic rock, and one bottle of sun tan with coconut oil to begin preparing his bathtub Varadero (14).

The detailed, lapidary vignette is framed by three mentions of the word coconut. At the opening, the reader finds "cocos" at dawn: "Se levantó al amanecer. Llenó la habitación de cocos [...]." In the middle, dividing Eloy's preparations for his bedroom areíto and bathtub Varadero, is the sentence, "Colocó el último coco en su puesto mientras danzaba al compás de su tarareo." Finally, the vignette closes with the English-language phrase "coconut oil": "Buenos días Primitivo. Me da tres cajitas de dye, dos cartuchitos de piedra volcánica fine grain y una botella de sun tan que tenga coconut oil" (14).

The vignette is also dominated by the number three, with two instances of the number six, a multiple of three with patriotic Cuban significance in the island's six provinces. The 1940s-era Cuban standard song "Seis lindas damas," celebrating the provinces as six lovely women, is referenced in the chapter of *La vida* that compiles the social notices of the Cuban exile leaders' daughters' *quinceañera* celebrations, "Linda damitas" (26-29). (1) There are the three mentions of coconuts. (2) Eloy inserts six feathers into his scalp. (3) There are three sets of action in the vignette: Eloy's areíto preparations, his panic over the forgotten lyrics to "Frutas del Caney," and his trip to the store to buy bathtub Varadero supplies. (4) In the "Frutas del Caney" panic, Eloy repeats the line "donde las frutas son...son..." three times. At the store, Eloy purchases (5) three kinds of items for (6) a total of six items: dye (three boxes), volcanic rocks (two), and coconut oil (one bottle). That makes six sets of threes and sixes.

Besides lending Eloy's debut vignette an obsessive-compulsive tone appropriate to his character, the odd, precise, and symmetrically-patterned details –beginning with the

coconuts and sets of threes and sixes—comprise some of the most famous attributes of the orisha Elegguá. Arióstegui summarizes the Pattakí, or origin story, of Elegguá, in which the divine being, in his original mortal state, encounters a supernatural coconut, dies three days later, and, once his people eventually pay the coconut due honor, he is reborn as the orisha:

> Elegguá es hijo de Okuboro que era rey de Añaguí. Un día, siendo un muchachón, andaba con su séquito y vio una luz brillante con tres ojos, que estaba en el suelo. Al acercarse vio […] que era un coco seco (*obi*). Elegguá se lo llevó al palacio, le contó a sus padres lo que había visto y tiró el obi detrás de una puerta. Poco después todos se quedaron asombrados al ver la luz que salía del obi. Tres días más tarde, Elegguá murió. Todo el mundo le cogió mucho respeto al obi, que seguía brillando, pero con el tiempo, la gente se olvidó de él. Así fue que el pueblo llegó a verse en una situación desesperada y cuando se reunieron los *arrubó* (viejos), llegaron a la conclusión de que la causa estaba en el abandono del obi. [....] Los viejos acordaron hacer algo sólido [...] y pensaron en colocar una piedra de santo (*otá*) en el lugar del obi, detrás de la puerta. Fue el origen del nacimiento de Elegguá como orisha. (Arióstegui 35)

Anthropologist Natalia Bolívar Arióstegui writes that the number three and multiples of three are sacred to Elegguá, adding that "Sus días son [...] todos los que caigan en 3. Se le celebra el 6 de enero y el 13 de junio." (36). González-Wippler

corroborates that the number three is an attribute unique to Elegguá (73). Futher, Arióstegui observes that Elegguá is by sacred tradition the first of the orishas to be honored: the first to be greeted and the first to receive an offering (36), which jibes with Eloy greeting the first light of dawn by placing a coconut, first among the other fruits, in his bedroom. Another attribute of Elegguá listed by Arióstegui is that chickens and roosters, and sometimes doves, are sacred and thus sacrificed to him (38), which accounts for Eloy drawing blood when he thoughtlessly takes one of the feathers out of his scalp, a grotesque detail that is otherwise difficult to explain.

Elegguá is supposed to love dance as well (Arióstegui 43) –an attribute seen in Eloy's celebratory jig— and, more specifically, he is associated with a spinning dance: "[L]os danzantes en su honor le bailan saltando en un pie y girando como un remolino" (Arióstegui 44). We see this with Eloy when he once again celebrates by dancing, this time turning a pirouette, and following another feather plucking, having completed his bathtub Varadero: "Se despojó de las plumas y encendió el radio. Hizo una pirueta y se tendió sobre la arena [...]." (Fernández, *La vida* 19). Of the list of fruits Eloy places in his room –coconuts, pineapples, mangos, and avocados—and regrets not having –mameyes— are the three that are listed in the song "Frutas del Caney" (mango, mamey, and pineapple). That leaves coconuts and avocados, which bookend the enumerated fruits put out by Eloy, both of which are sacred to Elegguá (Arióstegui 38).

Finally, Elegguá is associated with corners and crossroads (González-Wippler 73) and marks the threshold between internal and external spaces:

> Para los yorubas, la casa significa el refugio por excelencia, el lugar privilegiado contra los avatares del destino. En su misma puerta reside Elegguá, marcando con su presencia la frontera entre dos mundos: el interno, de la seguridad, y el externo del peligro. (Arióstegui 36)

There are only three instances in *La vida es un special* in which Eloy leaves his house. The first is when he ventures out to Primitivo's grocery store (14). As Eloy makes his way to the store, a group of bilingual wisecrackers make fun of his extravagant appearance in terms that simultaneously feminize him and perform a mocking transculturation of his headdress ("—Where are you going Pocahonta? you big chacha!" 14), to which Eloy takes emphatic offense on the grounds of his Cubanness: "[N]o soy Pocahontas. [....] Soy del caney de Oriente no de Virginia" (14). To add to Eloy's anxiety, his speech impediment –he evidently purses his lips when he tries to pronounce /fr-/, producing the bilabial /p/-- makes his defense of Cubanness the butt of a further juvenile joke, behind the humor of which is the taboo of "dishonorable" sex, i.e., the jokers hear "putas" (sluts) when Eloy tries to say "frutas" (fruits).

> --From where?
>
> --Del caney de Oriente, donde hay muchas frutas.
>
> --¿Muchas quée?
>
> --Frutas con f. (14)

A related incident happens to Eloy when he visits a psychiatrist, in the "Serenito" vignette, which describes his second venture out of home. The reason for Eloy's visit is eventually revealed as a sort of metanarrative/metaphysical character anxiety. The

psychiatrist, who is situated god-like outside the novel (possibly a stand-in for the implied author) asks Eloy if he's not aware of the cause for his anxiety and follows up with a leading question about Eloy's headdress: "¿Por qué lleva ese plumaje?" (41) Eloy asserts that it´s for "the Siboney (or native American) thing" ("—Por lo del siboney"). After a pregnant pause, the psychiatrist prompts Eloy to elaborate ("--¿Sí? Continúe."). Following another pause and prompt, Eloy finally expresses worry that he is not a psychologically well-developed character and that readers won't find any depth in him: "Ud. sabe me calificarán de personaje poco profundo" (41). The implication is that Eloy's feathers are key to the source of his anxiety, and that he is hiding behind "the Siboney thing" which, in the novel, expresses Eloy's obsessive, panicky search for indigenous national roots as well as his tendency to withdraw defensively into reduced, make-believe interior spaces of nationalistic performance in order to carry out that search.

The psychiatrist proceeds to have his patient cut open an apple, count the seeds, throw out all but one seed, and then imagine how many more apples the seed in his hand might produce. It's an ambiguous koan that, on one level, points to Eloy's polysemous character. In other words, there is more to the neurotic character than meets the eye. This scene relates to his Afro-descendant roots, which don't register with Eloy on account of his anxious search for "the Siboney thing." It also has to do with Eloy's repressed sexuality, which is tied throughout the novel to his emphatic denial of transculturation. In this sense, there is a further connection between Eloy's plumage and the parable of the apple seed. Eloy's feathers relate him to the risky transculturation of

Thanksgiving in San Given –the television version of whom also sprouts and sheds feathers (43-44)—as the psychiatrist suggests a linkage between Eloy and the typically North American fruit of the apple (e.g., the legend of Johnny Appleseed), which is also the fruit of temptation in the traditional oral version of the Garden of Eden story. At the same time, the image of feathers recalls the synecdochic repetition of the word "plumas" for Cuban gay culture in the first line of Severo Sarduy's novel *De donde son los cantantes* (1967):

> Plumas, sí, deliciosas plumas de azufre, río de plumas arrastrando cabezas de mármol, plumas en la cabeza, sombrero de plumas, colibríes y frambuesas; desde él caen hasta el suelo los cabellos anaranjados de Auxilio […]. Y Auxilio rayada, pájaro indio detrás de la lluvia. (91)

Finally, the literal answer to the psychiatrist's question is that the apple seed won't produce any fruit without grafting it to the stump of a fruit-bearing tree, another reinforcement of the tie between sex and transculturation, both topics and practices Eloy works strenuously to avoid. Eloy gets flustered, but not flustered enough to keep from asking the psychiatrist if he or she knows the part of "Frutas del Caney" that he is unable to remember. The psychiatrist's visual response, left to the reader's imagination, repeats Eloy's "frutas"/"putas" embarrassment from in front of Primitivo's grocery:

> --Doctor, ¿Ud. sabe cómo son las frutas en el Caney de Oriente?
>
> --¡Doctor! Con f. (41)

Eloy's third and final excursion is an attempt to attend a party at which the U.S. President and First Lady have invited him to lead a celebratory areíto during the time of

the U.S. occupation of South Florida. His way to U.S. occupied territory is impeded by a British blockade, and, not able to get through, he dedicates himself to poisoning Englishmen (35). Unwittingly, he is swept into an oneiric condensation of Cuba's pre-Escalera conspiracy history and the post-1898 U.S. military occupation of Cuba, as filtered through Griñán Peralta's revisionist essay, "La defensa de los esclavos."

Griñán Peralta's essay reflects on the collapse of the 1841-42 Turnbull Conspiracy, a British-Cuban conspiracy that involved both White Creole elites and intellectuals of color, with the mediating coordination of British consul David Turnbull, to overthrow colonial Spanish rule and bring about the abolition of slavery in Cuba. The main thesis is that Cuban white creoles betrayed their national and cultural fellows –i.e., the Afro-Cuban leaders and Latin American and Caribbean allies (53)— following Turnbull's 1842 expulsion from Cuba and arrest. Griñán Peralta singles out Domingo Delmonte for especially scathing criticism (Griñán Peralta 36-53). According to Griñán Peralta, Delmonte informed on the conspiracy to U.S. authorities, stirring up worries of a British challenge to the Monroe Doctrine and the British threat to the proslavery, sugar-producing, colonial regime in Cuba (52-53). Griñán Peralta presents Delmonte and the rest of the White Creole elites as opportunistic traitors who (1) set back the cause of integrated Cuban independence for a generation (54), (2) flirted with U.S. annexationism (54-66), and (3) contributed to setting the stage for the Escalera Conspiracy pogrom (61-73).

In this way, archival ghosts catch up with Eloy, and he responds by betraying the Cuban nationalism that he spends all of his time and effort performing. In working on a

familiar, first-name basis with "Pepe Antonio" [Saco] and "Domingo" (35), Eloy also betrays, within the logic of the narrative text, and in its relation to Griñán Peralta's revisionist historiographic text, his own existence as it is based on Afro-descendant cultural roots of which Eloy keeps ignorant.

In sum, *La vida es un special* thematically presents seemingly-chaotic discourse as Archive, in the sense that Foucault explains it in *The Archaeology of Knowledge:* Instead of seeing, on the great mythical book of history, lines of words that translate in visible characters thoughts that were formed in some other time and place, we have the density of discursive practices, systems that establish statements as events [...] and things [...]. They are all these systems of statements [...] that I propose to call archive. (128) In this sense, *La vida es un special* supersedes *Lilayando* in becoming, as Irizarry puts it, "a pure archive, a compilation of documents with no pretense of creating a main communitarian narrative" (594). At the same time, underlying the surface-level appearance of chaos, *La vida es un special* presents a coherent narrative structure that posits the poetics of transculturation as a manner of stage exit from the Cuban exiles' performance of themselves as "sugar people" within a vision of Cuban history staged as a sort of honor play. In *La vida es un special* Cuban independence history is portrayed as still-unfulfilled, still-unaccomplished, and still in process, off as well as on the island, and all the variegated strands of revisionist Cuban independence historiography from the Republican period, socialist Cuba, and the U.S. Cuban exile perform a behind-the-scenes reconciliatory collaboration.

2.9 Synthesis: Sugar People, Transcultured Turkeys, and Archival Ghosts

Along with Griñán Peralta's "En defensa de los esclavos," the revisionist Cuban independence historiography of Emilio Roig –e.g., from *El intervencionismo, mal de males de Cuba republicana* (1931) to *Martí, antimperialista* (1953)— Ramiro Guerra y Sánchez –e.g., from *La industria azucarera de Cuba* (1940) to *Historia de la nación cubana* (1952), as well as the more recent scholarship of Louis A. Pérez, Jr. –e.g., *Intervention, Revolution, and Politics in Cuba* (1978)—is influential in the narrative framework of *La vida es un special.* Roig's *1895 y 1898: Dos guerras cubanas. Ensayo de revaloración* (1945) portrays the 1898 Spanish-American war as the betrayal of the 1895 democratic, working-class project of Cuban independence by pro-imperialist elements among the Cuban planter class, in collusion with U.S. government and business interests in Cuban sugar. On Roig's foundation, *La vida es un special* constructs the outcome of this political plot, as explored above. Guerra y Sánchez's economic history *Azúcar y población en las Antillas* (1935) investigated "the development of the sugar industry and its relationship to land holding and population" (Smith 56), setting the stage as well for Ortiz's more poetic and influential *Contrapunteo cubano del tabaco y el azúcar* (1940). Pérez's *Cuba: Between Reform and Revolution* (1988) traces a thread of economic dependence on sugar from before the 1898 U.S. intervention and occupation in Cuba through the "ten million-ton crop" of 1968, establishing the historicity of sugar as a major, and accumatively more formidable, factor in delaying fulfillment of Cuba's prolonged struggle for independence and sovereignty. Such works of revisionist

historiography –i.e., revising the U.S.-promoted colonialist paradigm of Cuban national gratitude for the U.S. agency in Cuba's independence, announced in the "Academy" episode, as explored above—paint an ugly composite picture of Cuba as a lasting "nación azucarera" (Benítez Rojo 80), a perpetual "sugar island" persisting through reform and revolution and, according to the thesis of *La vida es un special,* on both sides of the Florida Straits.

The revisionist historiographic construct of "nación azucarera" translates more personally in *La vida es un special* to "Sugar People," a social hierarchy whose rhetoric of honor centers on (1) wealth, (2) the performance of racial whiteness, and (3) family honor, predicated on the chaste virtue of the family's women and the macho qualities of the men. Over the seemingly chaotic course of the novel, the cast of characters who claim the awful status of "Sugar People" –a concept implying, for example, historical if not actual claims to plantation ownership on a socioeconomic level, white homogeneity on the level of race and nation, and perhaps a cannibalist sweet tooth—narrows down to the Creole elite who facilitate the imperialistic U.S. invasion of Cuban Miami during the phantasmagoric war over San Given. Only a few of the novel's numerous characters – i.e., Nivaria, Oneida, and Ricardito's family, to an extent— achieve a transculturing, dynamic multicultural, multiethnic, cross-class status that transcends that of "sugar people." This is mostly by a process of self-exclusion from the taxing and not so rewarding theater of performing the "community"'s rhetoric of honor, a sort of accomplished independence from "Sugar's empire" on a small scale.

The story of the Espriella family, and especially Sylvia's narrative, presents a key saga of "stage exit" from the Sugar People. Sylvia González de la Espriella's early vignettes are handy to find thanks to her affectation of a "castizo" Spanish accent, as a part of her performance of racial whiteness, as previously mentioned. The reader's first view of an Espriella is Sylvia at her height of seeming authority in early post-Revolution Cuba, narrated from the point of view of Nivaria (10-11). Sylvia keeps up an appearance of aristocratic standing by way of conventional manipulation of props. Nivaria delivers to Sylvia a hand-me-down tea service from Nivaria's employer, "Kika," in this vignette (10-11) that, according to Kika, "es una tetera antiquísima. Ha estado en la familia por más de ocho generaciones" (19). Sylvia also enhances her status by ostentatiously keeping Nivaria on the verge of a heatstroke waiting to enter her house by the back door and by generally treating her in a dehumanizing way (10-11).

The next vignette, also from Nivaria's perspective, gives the reader a more humanized and pathetic look at Sylvia. Here Sylvia is seen in her lowly reality at the factory. Nivaria teaches Sylvia how to use her sewing machine. Sylvia continues to affect her high-toned peninsular Spanish accent and to put Nivaria down in front of their coworkers nonetheless. Finally, Nivaria catches Sylvia masturbating at her work station after hours for the voyeuristic pleasure of the foreman, presumably to curry favor (15). In doing so, Sylvia flouts the quasi-religious Cuban exile rhetoric of family honor, although Sylvia possibly regards this as a minor infraction.

The third vignette is the last featuring the Sylvia who speaks with /ss/ and /vv/. On the phone with Toto Lamartiné, she complains of the humiliation of working on equal

footing with "gentuza" like Nivaria (24). Toto responds with a cool reminder that Sylvia is now working for the colonial system of production, which, the reader comes to learn, Toto and Jacinto control. Toto uses the seemingly false cognate "factoría" and lets Sylvia correct her for it. "Ssyliva" is done with in the rhetoric of honor and now rejects terms implying the continuation of Cuban colonial condition under sugar's "empire." Toto knows it:

> --Tranquilízate, ya verás qué pronto sales de esa factoría.
>
> --Factoría no fábrica. Factoría es un establecimiento de tipo comercial situado en un país colonial.
>
> --Ok de esa fábrica. (24)

A final scene in Cuba closes the first movement of the Espriella family's story. Nivaria and a fellow domestic servant review the Espriellas' liquor cabinet and Sylvia's closet. The inventory consists of consumable luxury goods associated with the ostentation of social class. Nivaria and her friend find, first, liquors with fantastic- and old-sounding brand names evoking European empire –Felipe II, Carlos V, and Napoleon— and the fall of the Cuban republic, as personified by the rise to the presidency of Gerardo Machado in 1925 –Viña 25— and the 1951 suicide of Eduardo Chibás, leader of the reformist political party Partido del Pueblo Cubano (Ortodoxo)— a bottle of "Chiba". The Machado presidency (1925-1930) was notorious, first, for the administration's policies in favor of foreign investors while drastically cutting non-military government spending, during the onset of the Great Depression. As a response to the social unrest caused by mass unemployment and what was widely considered to be

a corrupt government, Machado declared martial law in November 1930 (Pérez, *Cuba* 251-63). Eduardo Chibás, a student leader during the 1933 revolution against the Machado military dictatorship, formed the Ortodoxo party, which "became generally associated in the popular imagination with economic reform, political freedom, social justice, and public honesty" (Pérez, *Cuba* 287). Having campaigned throughout the 1940s against the high-level government corruption during the presidential administrations of Fulgencio Batista (1940-44), Ramón Grau San Martín (1944-48), and Carlos Prío Socorrás (1948-52), Chibás had, according to Pérez, "aroused political emotions and heightened hopes of a new political order devoted to public integrity, administrative honesty, and national reform" (287). When Chibás committed suicide in 1951, it "delivered one more blow to a political system held in varying degrees of suspicion and scorn" (Pérez, *Cuba* 287). The Batista dictatorship was established by military coup within a year, in March 1952.

The second luxury item that Nivaria and her friend discover in Sylvia's closet is a collection of furs, underscoring the grotesque imagery of death: "Fíjate que tiene el animalito muelto con lo dojito [dos ojitos] y to. Ben no sea juyuya." Completing the tableau of a parodied embalming, the friends put on some of Sylvia's Germaine Monteil perfume, a product made in the United States with English and French names like Nostalgia, Frou Frou, and Fleur Savage (28-29). This embalming reads both as a foreshadowing of Nivaria's execution at the hands of the Legion of the Turkey, Hohenzollern, and the U.S. military occupation and as a symbolic burial of the Espriellas pretension to belong to the same community of interest as the Cuban sugar aristocracy.

After a relatively long absence from the text –made to seem longer after three reiterations of Esperanzita Rodríguez de Hohenzollern's social column appear featuring Sylvia's friend Toto but no mention of an Espriella—Sylvia reappears on the phone to Toto, in the key scene where Sylvia acknowledges the Espriellas' actual lifestyle, in contrast to Toto's. In contrast to the Espriellas, the Lamartinés represent a hyperbolic case of the "Cuban-American success story." Jacinto's business is going "viento en la popa" (a picturesque reference to "Canción del pirata," José de Espronceda's romantic poem on rapacious desire) and Jacinto is returning to peak physical form (50). Jacinto gives Toto luxury cars as capricious surprise gifts: a peach-colored Mercedes to match the living room furniture and a wine-colored Monte Carlo that Sylvia says she had read about in the social pages. Sylvia responds by sharing plainly that Ricardo works nightshift at a beach hotel and that she is still at the "factoría," now accepting Toto's previous lexical choice and her place within the neo-colonial system of the factoría (50). Finally, Sylvia signals her option out of the Sugar People when she turns down Toto's invitation to join her and her husband's new, exclusive social club and to attend a Legion of the Turkey function. Sylvia's preference to watch *San Given* on television, to write to her old friend Kika, who is still in Cuba, and to attend factory dances with her husband mark the new poetics of transculturation surrounding her. (50) That poetics is reinforced by the following vignette, "Alpiste" (birdseed), featuring Sylvia consulting a santero or a santera who knows her by name (60).

The senior Espriella story arc culminates in the eponymously titled chapter, "La vida es un special una ganga un yard sale," in which Ricardo tenderly waits for Sylvia to

shut off the television, which is noisily blaring a news bulletin announcing the coronation of the factory queen, so that the two can go out together to the "tremendo yard sale en la esquina" (75). Here, the "special" signifies the Espriellas getting out locally and improvising a spontaneous, thrifty date (75). It's a fitting conclusion for the storyline of the Espriellas but not mawkishly overdone. Part of the "noise" on T.V., for example, includes an advertisement for a male impotence remedy called Apetizín (75). Also, the reader finds that the senior Espriellas survive the Legion of the Turkey takeover while Nivaria doesn't (92). Still, the vignette provides a quiet scene of domestic normalcy before the pogrom, military occupation, and establishment of the Big Sugar regime.

The characters who don't gain such modest independence in the discursive territory of transculturation are overtaken by phantasmagoric reiterations of Cuba's violent colonial and neo-colonial history. Eloy, the character seemingly most set up to break away after Nivaria, opts out of his polysemous, Afro-descendant, transcultured, and queer potential. With Ricardito, by phone, Eloy chooses to stay safely "inside" once he has invited Ricardito, in passing, to move in with him to his bathtub Varadero and been rejected. The passivity of this move is reinforced by the fact that the reader has to infer Eloy's invitation from Ricardito's inchoate and defensive rejection:

> ¿Sabes lo que es una mierda neurótica? Probablemente no lo sepas pués has vivido en Varadero y te has salvado. No, no puedo vivir allí contigo. Es muy pequeño el lugar el lugar para dos. Además, te ensuciaría el agua y no sería más color acuamarina. (87)

After verbalizing fears that (1) the tub is too intimate a space for comfort and (2) that he would soil it, Ricardito launches into the feverish, neobaroque soliloquy that connects the anticlimactic "Varadero Gran Finale" to "La vida es un special una ganga un yard sale" by way of Calderón de la Barca's *La vida es sueño.* These vignettes represent the denouement of the storyline between Eloy and Ricardito, who repress the acknowledgment of their existential situation, beginning with their sexuality, in favor of hyperbolically neurotic Cuban exile nostalgia:

> Además, te ensuciaría el agua y no sería más color acuamarina. Entonces, te darías cuenta que en realidad no estás en Varadero, aunque en realidad sí estás. Entonces, me dirías, Ricardito vivimos en una porquería desbalanceada –no dirías mierda pués nunca to ha gustado ese sustantivo, y neurótica siempre la consideraste cursi--. Varadero se me está ensuciando y el agua ya es chocolate. [....] Pensarías un rato más y añadarías: Yo también tengo sueño. No querías soñar, pero tenías sueño y soñaste que estabas en Varadero. Estabas haciendo un reino y construiste un castillo, y lo rodeaste de agua y le pusiste un lago en el medio con cisnes, y el lago estaba bordeado de sauces y palmas, y los campos eran verdes sembrado de caña y las montaña azules se veían a lo lejos, y el río desembocaba en el mar y serpenteaba esquivando el castillo, y había gente, mucha gente, y alguien dijo que eran las doce tribus y tú te pusiste muy contento, y ellos nombraron un rey y le pusieron David y los campos florecieron y llovió miel del cielo [...]! (87)

In Calderón's reasoned "sueño" verses, dreaming is posited as a metaphor for living without fooling oneself –whether about fantasies of power or about living forever— elaborating the baroque theme of *desengaño:*

> [P]ues que la vida es tan corta,
> soñemos, alma, soñemos
> otra vez; pero ha de ser
> con atención y consejo
> de que hemos de despertar
> deste gusto al mejor tiempo (3.3.2358-63) [171]

In contrast, Ricardito's superabundant, wasteful lines are predicated on his irrational fear of soiling Eloy's tub. Viewed in a metaliterary sense, according to Sarduy's view of neobaroque eroticism, in which the frustrated search for the partial object manifests itself in verbal "saturación sin límites, la proliferación ahogante, el *horror vacui*" ("El barroco" 182), they result from Ricardito's frustated search for the partial object. Ricardito imagines Eloy falling from dream to dream to deeper dream, with *engaño,* illusion or self-fooling, intensifying at each new level. Ricardito defends Eloy's delusions in his speech: "Por eso, siempre voy a tus areitos; te visito en Varadero y te digo donde hay specials [...] ¡No quiero que vayas a Varadero y no te dejen construir tu castillo!" (87). Dreams, or rather, the paranoid nightmare of Griñán Peralta´s version of the Turnbull Conspiracy, the Club de la Habana Conpiracy, the Escalera terror, and 1898 U.S. intervention –all condensed in *La vida es un special*—are what carry Eloy away, first, when he finds himself poisoning Englishmen, and, second, when he is imprisoned for life

and Ricardito is executed in the name of the Cecilia Valdés conspiracy. "Life is a special" in that, first, life is devalued by colonialist or neocolonialist regimes. But "life is a special a bargain a yard sale" also in that the living, creative processes of culture production happen in the sites of exchange.

Ortiz's model of transculturation is portrayed in the narrative scheme of *La vida es un special* in the contextualized light of *Contrapunteo cubano* as an anticolonialist statement in the national debate surrounding sugar production and its effects on the Cuban nation around the time of the 1940 Constitutional Convention (Santí 62). In the novel, openness to processes of transculturation by way of sought-out culture contact and dialogue serves as a risky but necessary way of escape from the rhetoric of honor and monoculture of the "nación de azúcar". In this spirit, the novel performs a virtual staging of many debates and polemic of Cuban independence historiography from Republican Cuban, socialist Cuban, and U.S. Cuban sources.

Chapter Three: Commodifying Revolution as Popular Romance in *Loving Che* by Ana Menéndez

> And to come upon this photo now, so far from home [….] I handed the man my money and noticed that my hands were cold where they met his. After a moment, I said, For my mother. (*Loving Che* 226-27)

In this chapter, I examine Ana Menéndez's novel *Loving Che* (2003) in light of the frustrated attempt at rapprochement between Cuban writers on and off the island during the brief period of thawed cultural relations of the mid- to late-1990s, to which Iván De La Nuez refers as a momentary "hot peace" following the Cold War ("Registro" 126). I argue that the novel dramatizes, from a perspective that is critical of U.S. Cuban exile, tropes of national historiography and the economies of desire and discursive control surrounding the Cuban Revolution. My interpretation of the novel relates to the commodification of nostalgia surrounding the Cuban Revolution, including ideas of cultural heritage and national history, as a material threat to reconciliation between the Cuban populations on and off the island. In *Loving Che,* these populations may be viewed in light of the novel's family structure, where the nameless daughter leads a solitary, traveling existence based in towns marginal to Miami-Dade, and where Teresa, the "mother" in Havana, remains unknown for her, in spite of the daughter's best investigative efforts.

I argue that the focus on the heroic figure of Guevara on the island –and on the figure of the Cuban exile militants pitted against the Revolution and Guevara—is subverted by the novel's double implied commentary in favor of an empirical historiographic framework, focusing on analysis and explanation based on material foundations. I will also argue that the novel posits a critical view in general of the patriarchal conception of history, derived from Carlyle that "[w]e all love great men, love, venerate and bow down submissive before great men" (16). In *Loving Che*, the "great man," or "great villain," framework of Cuban revolutionary history is portrayed as the most lucrative in the global marketplace, a representation supported by Whitfield (*Cuban* 2-22). After an introductory section on Ana Menéndez' career and the critical reception of *Loving Cbe* and her other work as a writer and Miami journalist, the analysis in this chapter will focus on, first, the portrayal of the gendered discourse of family and nation in the novel. Next, this chapter will examine the sourcing of the historiography surrounding Guevara in Teresa's autobiographical text. Finally, by way of synthesis, I will explore the metacritical emplotment of Cuban revolutionary history as romance fiction –in light of the daughter's choices as framing narrator for approaching Teresa's testimonial text about Guevara and for dealing with the ultimate failure of her search— as well as the novel's intertextual references to Cuban and Latin American literature from the time of the Revolution. Since Menéndez's work as a journalist informs her fiction and Miami Cuban pundits used common media outlets to voice reaction to *Loving Che* and her 2005-2008 *Miami Herald* editorial column, and for the additional reason that

Menéndez's writing has been the subject of more commercial critique than scholarly literary criticism, many of the citations are from popular sources such as newspapers.

3.1 Ana Menéndez's Career, Readership, and Reception

Ana Menéndez is identified as a second-generation U.S. Cuban writer (Kakutani, "As" E8, Menéndez Interview, Williams). She was born in Los Angeles, California in 1970 and raised in Los Angeles and Miami by Cuban exile parents "with the thought that we would all be returning to Cuba very soon" (Menéndez Interview). Her first language was Spanish. Her mother tutored her in Spanish grammar, and her father taught her "to memorize Martí" (Interview), referring to José Martí (1853-95), the late-nineteenth-century Cuban poet, essayist, orator, political philosopher, and New York City-based leader of the 1890s Cuban independence. Menéndez began her writing career as a reporter for the *Miami Herald* (1991-94) and the *Orange County Register* (1995-97). In 2000, she completed the MFA program in Creative Writing at New York University, where she studied fiction with Edwidge Danticat, Breyten Breytenbach, Edna O'Brien, and Mary Gaitskill (Menéndez, "Birnbaum").

Menéndez's first book, the short-story collection *In Cuba I Was a German Shepherd* (2001), received favorable reviews in the U.S. press and the Pushcart Prize for its title story. Eder and Kakutani praise the "Chekhovian" minimalism and psychological nuance of the collection's stories they find the most effective (Eder 14, Kakutani, "As" E8), citing "poignance and comedy, with a touch of steel beneath" (Eder 14) and

"reportorial radar for the telling detail with a novelist's sympathy for her characters' interior lives" (Kakutani, "As" E8). With regard to the portrayal of the U.S. Cuban exile, Whitfield and Kakutani note an empathetic demythologization of exile claims to political and ethnic unity. According to Whitfield:

> Ana Menéndez does not break the Cuba-America hyphen but she bends it, exposing its twists and comical turns. She tells eleven quite different stories, through varying principal voices and a chorus of characters who persist as subtle background noise—although the connections between them and their stories are not spelled out. "Community," the mainstay of Cuban Miami, retains a tenuous quality. (31-2)

Kakutani adds that "[s]he is not afraid to reveal these people's illusions and self-deceptions, but she does so with an anomalous mix of comedy and compassion, excavating their secret hopes and fears while showing us their often misguided efforts to maintain their self-esteem" ("As" E8).

Finally, Kandiyota reads *In Cuba* in view of Cuban literature and, specifically, in light of the treatment of nostalgia in the work of Cristina García. Kandiyota concludes that, in contrast to the focus on the immigrant family in García, Menéndez examines "the specific issue of commodified nostalgia" within the economies of a variety of human relationships—game partners, tourists, couples, and friends, as well as different family arrangements (81). According to Kandiyota, an underlying theme of the collection's various stories is the exploration of "how non-Cubans […] and Cubans themselves market, buy, and purchase Cuban American culture" (81):

> Scholars of contemporary culture have critiqued nostalgia's role in perpetuating a consumer culture built on excessively idealizing and politically conservative visions of the past (Apparadurai, Jameson, Stewart). [….] Nostalgia is central to identity-for-purchase because it "manufactures" collective history as a bygone, ideal experience of everyday life, community, landscape, and heritage, to which the consumer presumably wants to return. (82)

The convergence of nostalgia, collective history, cultural heritage, conservative politics, and commercial profit is a topic developed throughout Menéndez's work, from *In Cuba* to her 2005-2008 editorial column for the *Miami Herald* ("In Cuba," "Calle" B3, "Freedom" B3, "Nostalgia" B1). In addition to exploring the theme with regard to the U.S. Cuban exile (e.g., "In Cuba," "Nostalgia"), she has written about the commodification of prerevolutionary and revolutionary history in the development of Cuba's official tourist industry ("It's Same" B1).

Menéndez spent the 2008-2009 academic year teaching journalism at the American University in Cairo, Egypt as a Fulbright Scholar. Her latest novel, *The Last War* (2009), represents a departure in that it is set in Istanbul and deals with problems not related specifically to Cuba or the Cuban exile but rather to war journalism in Afghanistan and Iraq. Her fiction has been anthologized with Cuban literature –e.g., Bardach's *Cuba* (2002), García's *¡Cubanísimo!: The Vintage Book of Contemporary Cuban Literature* (2003), and Valdés and Strausfeld's *Nuevos narradores cubanos* (2000)—U.S. immigrant literature –Bierlein's *A Stranger Among Us: Stories of Cross*

Cultural Collision and Connection (2007)—U.S. Latino literature –Augenbraum and Stavans' *Lengua fresca: Latinos Writing on the Edge* (2006) and Christie and González's *Latino Boom: An Anthology of U.S. Latino Literature* (2006)—and U.S. literature: Kulka and Danford's *Best New American Voices* (2000). Her work has been translated into Spanish, among other languages, but to date has not received critical attention in Cuba.

3.1.2 Towards *Loving Che* and After

In her interview with Robert Birnbaum on *Loving Che*, Menéndez cites the ubiquity of merchandise related to Ernesto "Che" Guevara (1928-1967), the Argentine-born hero of the Cuban Revolution and internationalist guerrilla leader, for sale in Havana:

> Go to Cuba now—I was there recently in the Hotel Nacional, in the souvenir shop, and it was all Che. Che key chains, Che pens, Che T-shirts. [….] Now he is a commodity. In [*Loving Che*], when the narrator finds the people claiming to have known her mother, they are selling off portraits of Che in the plaza to the tourists. ("Birnbaum")

Scholarship in Cuban anthropology (Delgado), film and media studies (Venegas), and literature (Loss, Whitfield *Cuban Currency*, "Truths and Fictions") reinforces Menéndez's view of nostalgia as a material asset for the Cuban economy following the fragmentation of the Soviet bloc and the demise of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance by 1991. *Loving Che* is unique in Menéndez's work in that the novel

explores, in the context of globalization, the marketing of Cuban history both in exile and on the island. Transactions involving historical source material range from the transfer of possession of a family document (*Loving Che* 7-9) to testimonial interviews on national history, solicited (165-68) and aggressively sold (185-89), to the forged document on Che Guevara that presents the novel's framing narrative problem (13-155).

Menéndez describes drawing from her work as a journalist in preparing *Loving Che* (2003): "Certainly […] the narrator's story is in […] reportage style and is drawn from some of my visits to Cuba" ("Birnbaum"). The novel's plot is driven by a process of investigative research undertaken by the unnamed, framing, first-person narrator. She is a Cuban-born woman in her late thirties who works as a travel journalist and freelance writer out of Miami-Dade. She was raised alone in a Miami suburb by her Cuban exile grandfather from the time she was an infant, without knowledge of her parents other than "the understanding that my father had been in prison, and had died [in Havana], and that in her grief my mother had sent me away" (3). The novel's brief but dense, untitled introductory section (1-12) establishes the narrator's lack of information about her own origins, the details of which her taciturn grandfather keeps to himself, as well as her fixation on archival materials. After her grandfather dies (9), during the early 1990s, the first phase of her investigation begins as she searches for her mother over a series of visits to Havana. The only pieces of information she has to work with are her mother's first name, Teresa, and Pablo Neruda's poem "La carta en el camino" (1951). The narrator's mother had pinned a fragment of "La carta" to her sweater on a scrap of paper as an infant, when her grandfather had taken her to Florida. Finally, several years after

her last visit to Cuba, where she "met many people and passed out my address to anyone I thought might have known my parents" (10), she receives a packet of letters and photographs purportedly from a Havana artist named Teresa. The letters present a romance narrative of the Cuban Revolution along with the claim that "Teresa" is the young Miami-Dade woman's long-lost mother by "Che" Ernesto Guevara.

The letters are intercalated as vignettes, which, along with interspersed photographic images of Guevara, make up the novel's second section, "Loving Che" (13-156). "Teresa" recounts her life story as an apolitical and socially detached painter from a wealthy family during the time of the Cuban Revolution. Her story follows a narrative arc that is commonly found in popular U.S. romance fiction, as observed by Janice Radway in *Reading the Romance* (134-39). According to the letters, Teresa's mother passes away when she is a young girl (*Loving Che* 27), and she grows up as a lonely but independent young woman (31-34). As a college student, she abruptly and seemingly capriciously marries an older man, a linguistics professor: "This was the way I always knew love would come, like a burst of color in the throat" (36). Her assertion that "I never stopped loving my husband" (122) is contradicted by her overall description of the relationship as one that is distant and ultimately unsatisfying (36-92). He is characterized as an esoteric pedant: "[H]is writings were so obscure that no one ventured to guess out loud" (37). He is described as having an emasculated manner, e.g., "[…] Calixto laughed […] a little bird laugh" (57), "Calixto seemed […] parched, removed, as if he had discovered a way to subsist on words alone" (93). He is presented as an unfaithful spouse who is dishonest about an extramarital affair (92). The scant physical contact

between the married couple in Teresa's text is limited to Calixto taking care of her during fevers brought on by her passion for the rebel (86, 103-04)

Guevara is portrayed as the archetypal love interest of popular romance fiction. This type of character is supposed to be "spectacularly masculine and unusually nurturant" (Radway, "Women" 62). Guevara is described as an alpha male, protecting Teresa from a pack of attacking wild dogs (114-15), performing as an expert lover (130-31), and effortlessly attracting power and public attention (81-82, 87, 89). At the moment of Guevara's first appearance in the text, Teresa's husband Calixto treats him obsequiously, in spite of the revolutionary's unassuming aspect –"his arm still in a cast [….] his hair greasy, his uniform dirty" (55)—causing him to "recoil slightly" at Calixto's fawning (56). On the other hand, Guevara nurtures Teresa, tenderly washing her hands (130), "weeping for the solitary individual who defends his oppressed self through art" (109), and mostly listening attentively to her (111-12, 118-19, 147-50). He is a passive, two-dimensional caricature of romantic masculinity, smelling "like wet leaves, old earth, metal" (65) and "the Antarctic sea, salt ice and sharp" (95), with "beauty that time doesn't alter, of marble statues that are always cool to the touch, carvings that come to life at night" (98).

At first, Guevara treats Teresa ambivalently, veering between courtly behavior – e.g., "Ernesto took my hand and kissed it" (57)—and seeming disparagement—e.g., "He wore a strange smile, as if I were a child and he were about to scold me for a transgression" (67). Teresa reacts defensively: "I thought of this other man who frightened me and repulsed me with his smell and filth" (57); "[H]aving the sense that he

was mocking me [….] I picked up my brushes again, which was a rude thing to do" (67). At first, she interprets his conduct as a sign of disregard, with brutish sexual overtones: "I had let this Argentine with his funny accent and mocking smile humiliate me. He smelled like a beast of the forest. Who did he take me for?" (69); "He's a communist and a charlatan, I said, and I just don't like him. And on top of that, I added –somewhat to my horror—he's a womanizer" (77).

Following a period of separation that lasts about four months (71-90), Teresa and Guevara develop a love affair that lasts for five years, building from episodes of sparring flirtation and battles of wits (102, 111-12, 136) to unguarded emotional and physical intimacy (116-19, 132-33, 146-50). The erotic scenes are described abstractly, with emphasis on Teresa's emotional responses, e.g., "Never before and not since have my thoughts marched so closely in step with the sensations of my body; I saw that the past and the future were written in smoke" (130). Over the duration of the relationship, Teresa comes to reinterpret what had at first seemed to her to have been Guevara's personal hostility and arrogance toward her as signs of his vulnerability. The reinterpretation culminates in the final scene with Teresa and Guevara, in which she administers medical treatment to him during an asthma attack. His dependence on her and sincere love for her are made manifest:

> […] I find the syringe. [….] His face so pale. A fallen little bird, thin panicked ribs pressing against his skin. [….] And then I plunge the syringe into his skin, looking away as I empty the adrenaline into his

> blood. [….] Color returns to his face. He closes his eyes. When he can speak again, he says, My lovely Teresa. (149-50)

Not coincidentally, the onset of the asthma attack is provoked by Guevara's expression of anguish and self-doubt over having personally executed a traitor among the ranks of the rebel fighters during the early stage of the Cuban Revolution (148). In this regard, Teresa resolves her doubts about Guevara's politics and violent action, reinterpreting them in a personal light. The fact that he is deeply tormented by his decisive actions, originating from a sincere sense of duty and desire for social justice, establish him as a sympathetic love interest for Teresa. The scene underscores his romantic sensitivity as the weather and his sad, quiet mood are portrayed in concert: "Ernesto is quiet. The rain falls in the courtyard" (148). His emotional vulnerability is reinforced by the physical fragility of his "little bird"-like, asthma-wracked body (149-50). Finally, when "Teresa" purportedly realizes that she is pregnant with the implied Cuban exile reader of her text, by Guevara, she discovers her true identity, which is supposed to be as his devoted lover and the mother of his child (144, 154). According to the text, when she sends her infant daughter into exile, she does so because "I was waiting" (154). The packet of letters, then, presents a metaphor for the deferred and divided Cuban national "family" and poses a sort of seduction of the Cuban exile reader within the narrative format of romantic fiction. The connection between Teresa's text and the romance genre is underscored with the use of the phrase "sweet sweet savagery" during a love scene: "He whispers in my ear. Sweet sweet savagery" (97). As Radway indicates, "[w]ithin the trade, the genre

was dubbed the 'sweet savage romance' after the second entrant in the field, Rosemary Rogers's *Sweet Savage Love"* (*Reading* 34).

The novel's third and final main section, "Letter on the Road" (157-228), presents the narrator's investigation in the United States and Cuba to, first, appraise the truth value of Teresa's text, presented in "Loving Che," and, more importantly for the narrator, to try to locate her mother. She conducts comprehensive research on Guevara and the Cuban Revolution (163) and consults with Cuban exile academic specialists in political and art history (168-75). Finally, and most crucially, the narrator carries out personal interviews with a number of people in Miami (163-68) and in Havana (187-89, 191-94, 197-202, 207-18). In summary, *Loving Che* is composed of three sections in two distinct first-person narrative voices. The first section establishes the narrator's intensely personal desire to find out about her mother, as well as her interest in Cuban national history and conspicuous habit of soliciting and sharing primary documents from and with complete strangers. Over a series of visits to Havana, she sets herself up as the potential target of fraud by indiscriminately sharing details of her family history along with her personal contact information. The suspicious packet of letters forwarded to her contains no credible details about her family beyond those that she had shared with the many contacts she had made superficially, literally going door-to-door in the El Vedado neighborhood of Havana. However, in its abundance of papers –the vignette structure of the letters, along with abundant photographic images— as well as its explanation of the only physical clue the narrator had held in her possession, the Neruda poem, supposedly a

token of the love between Guevara and Teresa, the packet poses an overwhelming temptation for the narrator to wish to "prove […] true" (160).

The second section performs a narrative seduction of the implied Cuban exile reader, suggesting, first, that she still has family in Havana and, second, that she should imagine herself as belonging by inherent right to the national family of socialist Cuba, as a daughter of Che Guevara. The third section explores the narrator's attempt to engage in historical research on the Cuban Revolution. She finds it impossible to untangle facts from the economies of desire and material economical interests surrounding the Revolution, in exile as well as on the island. Her search disproves the artificial, highly stylized narrative presented in Teresa's text (212-17). What's more, she is not even able to conclusively determine whether, as her seemingly most authoritative source in Havana, that text had been written by her mother in a mentally deluded state toward the end of her life (211-12), or whether the packet of letters had been purely contrived to gain access to a source of material aid, jokingly referred to in Cuba during the Special Period as "*fe*" [faith] i.e., *F*amilia en el *E*xtranjero:

> […] I was not going to be taken for a fool. [….] For years I had visited the country, walking the streets far more assiduously than I had this time, and nothing had come of it. [….] In the intervening years, the world had not changed very much, but Havana had. People were desperate in a way they had never been. Might not they be tempted to construct an elaborate lie? I cursed myself for having been so promiscuous with my information, for once again failing to note every detail of my interactions. (206)

The commercial interests that ultimately mire the narrator's research especially involve the "great villain" history produced in the U.S. Cuban exile and the revolutionary nationalist "great hero"-style history in Cuba. At the end of the novel, the narrator has abandoned the quest to find out about her family background, both in the immediate personal sense as well as in the metaphorical terms of the national family. She is rejected by the Cuban exile "community" (2, 174-75) and she remains painfully aware of her outsider status as a tourist in the dollarized economy of late-1990s Havana (180-82, 189, 197, 204, 218). What is worse is that the few artifacts related to her past, real or apocryphal, are treated or used as commodities involved in the marketing of Cuban culture or history. This point is reiterated when, traveling in Paris, she allows an antique store owner to sell her a token of her "Cuban" background in the form of a photographic print of Guevara (225). She buys the photo as part of her ritual of purchasing old photographs of strangers and "imagine that the stranger caught there is a half-forgotten old aunt, or a great-grandmother" or other family member (1). She does this "to ignore the creeping anxiety that always marred the last day of a trip" (222). At the end of the novel, the narrator purchases the photograph of Guevara as an implicit denial of her kinship with either Cuba or Cuban exile, as a way to ease the anxiety of preparing to fly alone:

> Slowly, thinking of nothing, I began to pack my bag: my travel clothing, my books, a few pages of loose notes. And when I was done, I lay across the top the tightly wrapped photograph of a man standing alone with his

> camera, the future not yet a darkened plate; a beautiful stranger who, in a different dream, might have been the father of my heart. (228)

The novel received mixed reviews in the U.S. press. Critics praise the first and third parts of the novel featuring the framing narrator, which are written in a logical, concrete, and concise style and take place in Miami-Dade and Havana during the 1990s. They cite "a keen ear for dialogue, along with a perfect pitch for the nuances of Cuban culture," "unsentimental insights about all things Cuban" (Bardach T12); "particularly good [detail] on the minutiae of Havana life" (Hicks 18), and an "artfully constructed […] tale to evoke the convoluted, possibly distorted workings of memory" (Kakutani, "Lust" E8). On the other hand, the overall novel has been criticized on the grounds of Teresa's text, "Loving Che," for its purple prose –"the abstract, heavy-breathing prose of a romance novel" (Kakutani, "Lust" E8)—and the flatness of Guevara's character—"Che himself, beyond Teresa's fevered obsession, never roars to life" (Bardach T12).

The overall evaluation of the novel depends on, first, to what extent the critic accepts the stylistic excesses of Teresa's narrative, for example: "Loving Che was like palest sea foam, like wind through the stars" (138). The second criterion is to what extent the novel is to be judged on the merit of its portrayal of Guevara—in other words, whether it is to be viewed as a work primarily about the monumental historical figure. Bardach does expect *Loving Che* to focus on Guevara; she finds the representation to be lacking. Her overall opinion of the novel is negative, then, faulting Menéndez's lack of imagination in dealing with her historical subject matter in fiction:

> At its best, *Loving Che* has some quality of *Wide Sargasso Sea* (also set in the Caribbean), Jean Rhys's haunting novel about the imagined life of Mrs. Rochester, the mysterious wife of Jane Eyre's love. Rhys took advantage of the perquisites of fiction, while Menéndez is burdened and challenged by history and the iconography of her subject. [….] Would that she had told us more. (T12)

Kakutani reads *Loving Che* as a novel not focused on Guevara but rather "about two women's efforts to recapture the past" (T12). Her review is favorable, with the caveat that Teresa's voice can be distracting:

> Although Teresa's story, like the one Duras told in "The Lover," can devolve into mannered, breathy reveries, Ms. Menéndez has artfully constructed the tale to evoke the convoluted, possibly distorted workings of memory. As Teresa's recollections circle around and around the past, obsessively rehashing certain events while embroidering others, the reader comes to question both her veracity and the narrator's need to believe in the mythology she has conjured around both their lives. (T12)

Rozzo appreciates the fragmented structure of Teresa's text, beyond the qualities to which Bardach, Kakutani, and Hicks object. He observes a fragmentation of historical and literary memory underlying Teresa's attempt to organize a unitary narrative of her alleged love affair with Guevara:

> As our heroine gamely plows through Teresa's *rajas de memoria* ("shards of remembrances"), Menéndez takes us on an extended detour reminiscent

> of Argentine writer Jorge Luis Borges. These found literary objects tell of Havana before, during, and after the revolution: […] Eddy Chibás and his on-air suicide, the glamorous department store windows of El Encanto, red and black July 26 flags […]. (Rozzo A1)

In the field of Hispanic literatures, Alvarez-Borland has examined intertextual connections between *Loving Che* and Cabrera Infante's historiographic novel, *Vista del amanecer en el trópico* (1974). *Vista* narrates an abbreviated, cynical version of Cuban history as one continuous cycle of purposeless violence, told through brief, ekphrastic vignettes. Alvarez Borland compares the use of visual media in the construction of national identity in the two works.

3.1.3 Menéndez and the Miami Media Machine

In 2005, two years after publishing *Loving Che,* Menéndez began writing a weekly editorial column for the Metro and State section of the *Miami Herald* that ran through 2008. While her column addressed Cuban exile politics (e.g., "Debate" B1, "Exiles' 'Pain'" B6, "Time" B1), it provided commentary on a wider range of topics as well, including U.S. immigration policy and problems facing immigrant workers ("Deportees" A1, "Immigration" B1, "Undocumented" B3), labor issues ("Better Wages" B1, "Wake" B1), Miami-Dade and Florida politics ("Liberty City" B1, "No Vaccine" B1), and U.S. foreign policy ("Bureaucracy's" B1, "Iraq" B1). Max J. Castro writes appreciatively of the social criticism, independent perspective, and humor of Menéndez's

column: “Constantemente se enfrentó a poderosas personas y organizaciones, desafió opiniones generalizadas y utilizó el humor para denunciar lo absurdo de ciertas actitudes y la hipocresía de orgullosas figuras públicas.” On the other hand, beginning with the 2005 article she wrote in defense of veteran staff writer and Cuban exile *bête noire* Jim DeFede, whom the paper had just fired when she arrived (“Herald” B1), Menéndez became the target of flak by ideologically right-wing Cuban exile commentators in talk radio, print, and online media.

The animosity became more intense as she continued to probe controversial situations, reporting, for example, that the Spanish-language counterpart to the *Miami Herald, El Nuevo Herald,* was keeping three writers on staff whom remained on the payroll of the U.S. government-funded, anti-Communist propaganda program Radio Martí (“Let’s” B1). Her critique of the corporate-sponsored Cuban exile exposition Cuba Nostalgia –“Nostalgia Is Now for Sale, and It’s Costly”—provoked the harshest wave of ad hominem backlash on Cuban exile blogs such as *Babalú* and *Cuban American Pundits*. In the article, she challenges the high-flown political ideals professed at the event, implying that the exposition packages history and nation to serve the commercial interests of the sponsors and merchants:

> The CANF information booth ("Adopt a Dissident") stood in solidarity alongside Costco Wholesalers, Comcast and Miami-Dade Transit, which was ready to fill the gap for all those not lucky enough to win the 2007 Chevy Cobalt in the drawing next door. [….] As rip-offs go, the $12 entrance to Cuba Nostalgia wasn’t nearly as offensive as this notion of an

> Exile's Bazaar: a place where history is a marketing concept and memory is […] priced for a quick sale. ("Nostalgia" B1)

Henry Gómez, a writer for *Cuban American Pundits*, reacted to the column by compiling and publishing reader-submitted ideas of how Menéndez would organize the Cuba Nostalgia event differently. The conjectures range from red-baiting –"Anyone that complains about the event would be detained at the 're-education' exhibit, this is one of the few exhibits that would have a corporate sponsor, Florida Power & Light would provide the juice for the electroshock 'therapy' machines"—to misogynist insults, including reference to *Loving Che*: "Ana Menéndez's favorite exhibit would of course be the Che Guevara kissing booth, where you get to kiss an actor dressed as the filthy killer, but you don't get to kiss him on the cheek or mouth […]. But Ana Menéndez is very comfortable with that." Comments posted on *Babalú* in response to the Cuba Nostalgia column smear her as a traitor to the Cuban exile community. An individual identifying him or herself as "delacova" accuses Menéndez of carrying on the enmity toward the Cuban exile community of former *Miami Herald* writer DeFede. The 25 May 2006 comment demonstrates obsessively close attention to the newspaper's inner politics, and a detailed, resentful memory:

> Ana Menéndez was one of the *Herald* reporters who signed the petition requesting that the obnoxious Jim DeFede be rehired at the *Herald* after he was fired. DeFede was notorious for attacking the Cuban exile community. It should not surprise you that Menéndez has followed in his footsteps.

Menéndez wrote about the rhetoric of outraged denunciation among the Miami Cuban community in a 16 May 2007 column titled "Rabble-Rousers Gravitate to Easy Targets." She observes that right-wing exile protestors harass small, symbolic targets – she cites the boycott of the talk radio station WNMA, Miami organized by prominent exile activist Iliana Curra, on the grounds that talk-show host Edmundo García was pro-Castro, a *Castrista*—but that they condone major transnational business deals with actual allies of the Cuban government, such as Bouygues Travaux Publics. Bouygues is a multinational corporation that "built 11 resort hotels with the Cuban military," after which it was awarded a billion-dollar bid on a bridge construction project by the Miami-Dade county commission, with no material resistance from Miami Cuban commissioners and no objection by exile protestors ("Rabble-Rousers" B1). The article is provocative, beginning with a facetious reference to the epithet by which Fidel Castro would habitually refer to the Cuban exile, "Miami Cuban Mafia":

> This is what the mighty Miami Cuban Mafia has come to. Their nemesis is dying, their bitterness has grown old and their power has dwindled to sad […] self-parody. [….] The rabble-rousers love to complain about speech they deem unorthodox. But they fall oddly silent when it comes to confronting powerful business interests like Bouygues or the Chinese Shangri-La hotels or our own Terra Group that sought to maim the Freedom Tower. [….] That's Miami in the waning days of nostalgia: a place where politics is personal. And business is business. (B1)

Following publication of the article, Menéndez was censured publically by Curra, whose moral authority in Cuban Miami rests on her fame as a former prisoner of the Castro regime. In her open letter to the *Miami Herald* management, posted on her blog *Baracutey cubano*, Curra demands a public retraction of the column, threatens an anti-defamatory lawsuit, and performs a symbolic excommunication of Menéndez from the "hard-working, decent, and patriotic" Miami Cuban exile, reinforcing the original point of her column:

> Creo que, tener una opinión en contra de una comunidad, no le da permiso alguno para llamarla "mafia". Su insulto nos obligaría el derecho de imponerle una demanda legal, a no ser que se retracte públicamente [….] La libertad de expresión es algo que comparto plenamente, pues viví en un sistema opresivo que coartó mi derecho a opinar y me llevó a la cárcel para vivir los peores años de mi vida. Lo que es inaceptable es la expresión totalmente difamatoria contra una comunidad exiliada […]. [….] Denigrar a las personas mayores de la forma que lo ha hecho esta periodista y […] llamarnos "Miami cuban mafia", es algo indigno, ofensivo y propio de personas que sienten un odio inmenso por esta comunidad trabajadora, decente y orgullosa de ser cubana.

Miami AM talk-radio veteran Ninoska Pérez-Castellón condemned Menéndez, as well, on the popular program *Ninoska a las tres*, referring to the anti-communitarian "*bilis*" (bile) of her writing. Like Curra, Pérez-Castellón demanded a public "retraction". Instead, Menéndez's 27 May 2007 column in response, "Exiles' 'Pain' Must Include

Room for Dissent," develops her point on discursive control in the Miami Cuban exile and urges further investigation of the Bouygues tunnel project and of the silence among the Cuban exile activist community about it:

> […] Bouygues is represented by attorney Ignacio E. Sánchez, a board member of the Cuban Liberty Council, one of the most outspoken anti-Castro organizations in this country. During the past week, Sánchez's fellow board member Ninoska Pérez Castellón has blasted me on Spanish-language radio […]. She has demanded that I "retract" my column, perhaps forgetting that the only systems that demand and extract retractions on opinions are totalitarian ones. [….] In an April 3 letter to Miami attorney Nicolás Gutiérrez, [Sánchez] said Bouygues "had never participated in any project in Cuba." That work was done by an affiliate. Many companies use affiliates in Cuba to get around Helms-Burton, the U.S. law that seeks to punish foreign companies that "traffic" in expropriated Cuban properties. Sánchez helped write the law. He knows the loopholes. [….] I suspect that if anyone else but Sánchez represented Bouygues, Ninoska might publicly question the deal with far more rigor. (B1)

Menéndez's contentious relations with Miami Cuban exile activists, together with the *Herald*'s decision to cut costs, resulted in the elimination of her editorial column in 2008.

In sum, Menéndez's work demonstrates close attention to Cuban American ethnic and business politics. It further reflects interest in and knowledge of Cuban

historiography and nationality. It is critically distanced and investigative in approach, however, rather than nationalistic and nostalgic. In this regard, Menéndez's background as "the daughter of Cuban exiles" (Kakutani, "As" E8, Menéndez, Interview, Williams), an epithet cited frequently in reviews, interviews, and marketing materials, is more complicated and illuminating of her work than an ethnic identification or colorful biographical detail. It implies, first, Menéndez's grounding in and first-hand perspective on the web of cognitive and social frameworks for authorizing Cuban historicity within Cuban exile discourses and the personal stakes involved in reinforcing or challenging such frameworks. At the same time, the filial identification underscores the independent critical outlook and departure from exile tropes and received knowledge that characterizes Menéndez's work. When Birnbaum presses Menéndez in an interview to define her ethnic identity in terms of attitude toward the Cuban Revolution, she reinforces the open-ended individuality of "the daughter," referring to the pithy, "quick dust jacket description" with pointed literalism. In this way, she redirects the conversation away from the 1960s to present-day specifics:

> RB. I wasn't laughing about [the Revolution] when I was 20 and 21. Are you Cuban American—what are you? What is the quick dust jacket description of you?
>
> AM. I don't know; let's look. [looks at book] "the daughter of Cuban exiles."
>
> RB. That doesn't exactly deal with the issue.
>
> AM. I think that is a good description. I am the daughter of Cuban exiles.

RB. Who lives in Miami and Turkey.

AM. That's right.

The brief exchange concludes with the affirmation of geographical dislocation –dual residence in Miami and Istanbul—as a biographical detail with which she is more comfortable than claiming ethnic identification as Cuban, Cuban-American, or Cuban exile.

3.2 Overview and Context of the Novel: Gendered Discourse of Family and Nation

The plot structure of *Loving Che* is organized around a dynamic of gendered discourse of family and nation in which mother tongue –*lengua*—is in tension with patriarchal idiom, *idioma*. Menéndez's account of her own mother's and father's different approaches to her early language education –her mother taught her prescriptive Spanish grammar, while her father directed her to memorize the work of José Martí— provides an example of such a tension. The mother tongue, *lengua* in Spanish – constituting an affective tie of kinship, and distinguished by "not lexis but cathexis" (Pérez Firmat, *Tongue* 15-16)— is counterposed by her father's *idioma,* the language of "the country or region where we are born or raised, the *patria* […] of which we are native or 'natural' […]," and which remains "external to the user" (Pérez Firmat, *Tongue* 16-17). Overall, Menéndez associates the acquisition of her first language with the shared Cuban idiom to which Martí's writing is key: "Growing up, I always felt more Cuban, than American" (Interview).

A monumental national figure in Cuba and in the sites of Cuban exile, Martí is credited with "giving ideological substance and political form to *Cuba Libre*" (Pérez, *Cuba* 147), compiling and articulating core intellectual and rhetorical bases of Cuban popular nationalism:

> His revolutionary formula was a conglomeration of national pride, social theory, anti-imperialism, and personal intuition. He rationalized it all into a single revolutionary metaphysic and institutionalized it into a single revolutionary party. Like a master weaver, Martí pulled together all the separate threads of Cuban discontent –social, economic, political, racial, historical—and wove them into a radical movement of enormous force. (Pérez, *Cuba* 147).

Martí is further considered to be a precursor for nationalistic Cuban exile politics (Lugo-Ortiz 14-17, Poyo 16-31). Lugo-Ortiz, for example, writes about his work incorporating U.S. Cuban émigré communities from New York to Florida to Louisiana in the Partido Revolucionario Cubano (PRC), the pro-independence political party he helped to found in 1892 (9-21). Lugo-Ortiz makes the case that Martí's writing on the Florida exile communities in the PRC's newspaper *Patria* served the party's need for "the imaginary construction of a collective shared space: the construction of a second Cuba in exile," positing "the Cuba of the emigrants" as the authentic Cuban nation, over "the Cuba that is materially and geographically concrete, but morally degraded" (14).

Martí's rhetorical formulation of *patria* –fatherland, deriving from the Greek *patrios* ("of our fathers"), to which he refers as a national spiritual essence, and which

doesn't necessarily signify *patria*'s control of its rightful land, "su propia tierra"—is predicated on gendered imagery, as in the important 26 November, 1891 speech he delivered at the Liceo Cubano in Tampa, Florida, titled "Con todos y para el bien de todos". Martí preaches the need for the robust *patria* of exile–"the pious and provident fatherland rising up here"—to replace the crumbling, "pus-blinded," "gangrene-gnawed" *patria* of the island:

> ¡A la patria que allí se cae a pedazos y se ha quedado ciega de la podre, hay que llevar la patria piadosa y previsora que aquí se levanta! ¡A lo que queda de patria allí, mordido de todas partes por la gangrena que empieza a roer el corazón, hay que juntar la patria amiga donde hemos ido, acá en la soledad, acomodando el alma, con las manos firmes que pide el buen cariño, a las realidades todas, de afuera y de adentro, tan bien veladas allí en unos por la desesperación y en otros por el goce babilónico […]! (272-73)

Beyond the question of establishing sovereign government in Cuba, Martí presents returning to the island and fighting for independence as the way in which Cuban men will realize their masculinity. The fulfillment of "our" Cuban woman is predicated on that of "her [male] companion":

> ¡[N]i nuestra mujer, que aquí oye atenta, sueña más que en volver a pisar la tierra propria, donde no ha de vivir su compañero, agrio como aquí vive y taciturno; ni el niño, hermano o hijo de mártires y de héroes, nutrido en

> sus leyendas, piensa en más que en lo hermoso de morir a caballo, peleando por el país, al pie de una palma! (273)

A patriarchal basis underlying Cuban nationalistic discourse, dating back to the formative rhetoric of Martí, is that worth is supposed to be imposed on the land through either the leadership of righteous men –following Martí's metaphor of the 587-332 B.C.E. Babylonian captivity of Judah's priestly class ("el goce babilónico")—or through sacrifice in combat –Martí's evocation of the phallic, earthy images of the horse and the palm tree.

Loving Che relates the gendered representation of land, the rhetoric of ideological struggle for literal or discursive territory, and problems of communication to an individual Cuban émigré's attempt to return to the island and reconcile with family. The main problem facing the first-person narrator of *Loving Che*, an anonymous woman in her thirties from Miami-Dade, is to find out about her mother in Havana (3-4) and, if possible, to recover the ties between mother and daughter (10). The narrator was brought into exile from Cuba as an infant and raised by her maternal grandfather, who is of little help resolving her information gap:

> I grew up with the understanding that my father had been in prison, and had died there, and that in her grief my mother had sent me away. [….] As a girl I had already begun to sense a void behind me, and as I grew older I became more and more preoccupied with the blank space where my mother should have been. As I passed into my adolescence, I spent more and more time thinking about her, and in each imagining she grew more

> beautiful, more exciting, more different from the woman I myself was becoming. The easy respect, the love, I had shared with my grandfather slowly came to be overlaid with frustration and distrust. The more questions I had for him, the more he seemed to retreat into the quiet of his books. When I asked him once why he didn't have one photograph of my mother that he could show me, he responded, simply, that she had never given him one. (4-5)

Indeed, throughout the novel, the people on whom the narrator depends to find her mother either interact with her in terms of a Cuban exile ethnic identity or a version of Cuban culture or history for the benefit of a foreign consumer.

Structurally, the novel presents two sets of discursive relationships through which the narrator attempts to gain knowledge of her mother but instead confronts the obstruction of a father figure. In the introductory section to *Loving Che*, the narrator's grandfather mediates the flow of information between mother and daughter. The second section, the intercalated packet of letters purportedly sent by the narrator's mother herself, is organized by the dramatic allegation that Che Guevara is the narrator's father. The romance fiction of Teresa and Guevara develops the story of the upper-middle-class artist's reconciliation with the Cuban Revolution and her near self-actualization by means of her love affair with Guevara, culminating in the birth of their child, the overall framing narrator of *Loving Che.* During the third section, the narrator, having set out to find her mother, instead finds herself obliged to research her supposed father, Che Guevara. By way of a coda, following the failure of her quest to find her mother, the narrator looks for

personal diversion in an antique store during a trip to Paris. Once the proprietor learns of her Cuban origins, however, he treats her according to nationality –"Cuban! Ah, Cuba Hermosa. My favorite country"—and proceeds to sell her a photographic print of Che Guevara, which she mordantly purchases "[f]or my mother" (227).

3.3 Interposition of the Cuban Exile Grandfather

The grandfather represents the first obstacle to the narrator's knowledge of her mother. The most information she is able to find out, beyond the basic facts of her exile, she must coerce from him during a weekend visit while she is attending university (5). She presses the issue after a lunch, forcing conversation after first asserting equal standing –declining to wash the dishes and instead joining him for a smoke—violating their usual after-meal ritual:

> [W]hen the weather was good, he retreated to the porch after the meal to smoke a cigar. […] [I]nstead of doing the dishes first as was my custom, I decided to join him right away. I sat beside him and after a moment decided to help myself to a cigar as well. My grandfather's eyes widened ever so slightly for a moment, but he remained silent. [….] I don't understand, I said slowly, how you could have gone these years without trying to get in touch with her. (5)

Once she has "pushed too hard" (6) by rhetorically questioning the grandfather's identity as her progenitor –"I don't understand how you have not one photograph, not one letter,

not one document. […] [W]hat's to keep me from thinking […] that you're not really my grandfather?" (6)—he consents to share scant anecdotal information about her mother as a little girl:

> After a long while, my grandfather said, We had a lemon tree in the courtyard of our house. A small tree– we grew it in a pot. But it gave good fruit. When she was a little girl, your mother used to pick lemons and eat them one by one in little bites. [….] Even then she was so beautiful that she did what she wanted. The effort would twist her little face, but still she would bite into it. [….] Then he leaned back in his chair and let out a sigh. This rain will be good for the ferns, he said. (6)

The grandfather's answer is defensive, bordering on an insult. He gives it out of upset – "I saw that his hand shook where he had brought it to his cheek" (6)—after his sense of paternal honor has been violated. The anecdote is conspicuously narrow in scope and slight in the detail that it offers. Above all, it is irrelevant to the narrator's need and urgent request for information connecting her with her mother, except by the chiding, infantilizing implication that the narrator's behavior reminds the grandfather of his daughter's petulant stubbornness as a little girl. After punctuating the sketch with the dull, subject-changing comment on the ferns getting enough rain, the grandfather leaves the narrator alone outside, closing the door on her attempt at peer-to-peer conversation, to learn something about her mother: "The sliding glass door behind me opened and shut" (6).

The grandfather rejoins the narrator at dusk. He presents her with the closest thing she gets to a document of origin, a piece of paper containing the first three lines of Pablo Neruda's poem "La carta en el camino" (1951), presented in the novel in English translation:

> Farewell, but you will be
> with me, you will go within
> a drop of blood circulating in my veins (9)

The revelation scene is staged suspensefully. At twilight, the narrator experiences the awareness of entering a liminal zone, beginning with a heightened sense of alertness – "For some years, I had been aware in myself of a strange detachment, an aimlessness. [….] Now I heard every small rustle in the grass, every labored ant-step" (7). The grandfather reappears just as "it was almost dark" with "a worn piece of yellow paper" (7). Finally, he "lit the small candle between us" (7). The candlelight casts shadows that produce the double effect of making him appear oversize and emphasizing his wizened, parchment-like hands:

> He picked up the note again and when he sat back, his giant shadow materialized behind him. [….] In the candlelight he seemed older than ever, shadows exaggerating his bony fingers, highlighting the fragile fabric of the skin over his knuckles. (7-8)

During the scene, the grandfather makes known his role as mediator of information between his daughter in Havana and his granddaughter in Miami-Dade. First, he reveals to the narrator that, without her knowledge, he had been writing to her mother regularly

for years: “Every May, on her birthday, I wrote her a letter. If I have no letters to show you now it’s only because she never responded” (7). Although the narrator describes having questioned him about her mother from the time she was a little girl (4), the grandfather, rather than include her in the letter writing, chooses to write about her, selecting documents around her to include in his one-sided correspondence, e.g., “[s]ome drawings you made, and yes, a school photograph of you” (7). Any response from the mother would likewise have to come through him. The grandfather asserts his role as textual mediator between mother and daughter as a matter of course. In effect, while he blames the mother for lack of material to provide the narrator, when he finally presents the yellowed paper –containing the copied lines from Neruda— he does so with a comment emphasizing his control over the document:

> My grandfather opened the paper in his hands. [….] [I]t wasn’t until we arrived in Miami that I noticed that your mother had pinned a note to your sweater. I threw it away immediately, without reading it. And then that night, I took it out of the trash. I was never going to show it to you. What is the use of keeping these things? (8)

Giving over the paper, the grandfather exhibits the same sign of agitation that he had shown when the narrator had questioned his paternity: “My grandfather smoothed the paper out on his lap and handed it to me with the same shaking hand I had noticed earlier” (8). The scrap of verse, together with the mother’s name, Teresa, which is finally revealed during the scene (7), are the only useful clues that the narrator is able to procure from her grandfather before, a few years later, he passes away (9).

The narrator follows the episode with a description of an extended period of directionless travel. First, she drops out of college and stays at a small, not well-known Central Florida beach town to the north of Daytona called Sebastian Inlet. Over the course of "months and then years," the range of her travel expands, becoming "farther and wider, my desire to keep moving always outpacing my small terror of planes, my fear of leaving" (9), to the point where the news of her grandfather's death reaches her in India (9). Seemingly irrational on the level of plot, the narrator's actions follow a coherent poetic logic. In particular, the description of her wandering is dominated by imagery of air and sea: "one windy December day," "a flock of seagulls rose against the deepening sky like a hundred evening stars," "my desire to keep moving […] outpacing my […] terror of planes," "the coast […] Sebastian Inlet," and "listening to waves" (9). The brief passage invites comparison to recent Cuban cultural and literary criticism.

According to De la Nuez, air and sea metaphors are associated with marginalized femininity and queer sexualities in Cuban national discourse, "in tension with the fixed topography of the substance of land" (133). Telluric metaphors, in contrast, are associated with the "conditions of strong and substantial identity" of nation, fatherland (*Patria*), leader, and territory, signifying masculine power:

> En una cultura en la que la Nación, la Patria, el Líder o la Tierra, asumen condiciones de identidad fuerte y sustancial, las formas menores no tienen demasiado espacio y las experiencias minoritarias se ven obligadas a un exilio real o metafórico. Mar y aire: elementos en tensión con la topografía fija de la sustancia de la tierra. [....] [L]as estatuas ecuestres de

> los héroes de la independencia, el caballo como forma mitológica del poder masculino, ocultan una serie de metáforas aéreas o maritimas para desacreditar la debilidad, la homosexualidad o, incluso, el bilingüismo: pájaros, pargos y chernas nombran estas formas que se oponen al recio legado del paisaje de la tierra. (133)

As opposed to the traveling narrator, the grandfather is associated with the telluric imagery of plants, wood, and paper. On walks to and from school with the narrator, "[w]hen he spoke it was to point out a particular type of tree that he wanted me to know about, or the name of a flower that was growing in someone's garden" (3). He is described as a horticulturalist, specifically having tended a lemon tree in Havana and cultivated ferns in Miami-Dade (6). The only furniture mentioned in his Florida house is a cupboard and plain, wooden chairs: "[h]e would sit in his bare yellow chair and read for hours in silence" (3), "I heard my grandfather shift in his chair" (6), "he leaned back in his chair" (6), and "pressing his hands against the wooden arms of his chair, he lifted himself up" (6). The narrator remembers that "there was no television set […] only books and the quiet turning of pages" (3). The old paper from Teresa is repeatedly connected to the image of the grandfather's hands: "In his hands, my grandfather carried a worn piece of yellow paper" (7), "My grandfather […] fingered one of the edges of the paper in his hands" (8), "My grandfather opened the paper in his hands" (8), "My grandfather smoothed the paper out on his lap and handed it to me with the same shaking hand […]" (8). Finally, plant, wood, and paper images converge in the unusual private wake that the narrator observes following the grandfather's death, having missed the

funeral: “Unable to sleep, I sat up all night in his chair, reading one of his books on the growing and care of ferns” (10).

In sum, he is associated, first, with the founding gestures of planting and cultivating and, second, with control over the only existent document, away from the island, of the narrator’s origin and connection with her mother. (The narrator apparently doesn’t own a copy of her birth certificate, because she mentions making and then canceling plans to make an additional trip to Cuba to look it up and “[m]aybe talk to people in the government,” 220). His character is grounded in national discourses of masculinity through a metaphorical connection with the land, as discussed by De la Nuez, only his environment was suburban Miami-Dade. The plant imagery related to the grandfather calls to mind the botanical metaphors that appear in famous works by Martí, e.g., “El vino, de plátano; y si sale agrio, ¡es nuestro vino!” (Martí, “Nuestra” 125) or the image of “new pines” for the enduring national spirit of the Cuban people: “[V]i por sobre la yerba amarillenta erguirse, en torno al tronco negro de los pinos caídos, los racimos gozosos de los pinos nuevos [...]” (Martí, *Obras* 286). In the 17 February 1892 speech delivered in Hardman Hall in New York City, titled “La oración de Tampa y Cayo Hueso,” Martí combines the images of cigar factories, palm trees, and young people learning from a grandfather in the émigré enclaves of Tampa and Key West, Florida to set up his portrait of the exemplary Cuban community: “Y aquellos rumores de talleres que se engalaban, de palmeras que se quedaban sin penacho, de trabajadores que deliberaban sobre un tierno presente, de voces nuevas que aprendían del abuelo lleno de cicatrices […]” (Martí, *Obras* 295). The grandfather is thus associated with authoritative

knowledge. His character represents the archetypal patriarch and, more specifically, the sort of benign Cuban exile patriarch presented in Martí's "La oración de Tampa y Cayo Hueso."

The three-member family –the grandfather, his daughter in Havana, and his surrogate daughter, the narrator, in Miami-Dade—suggests a metaphor for the divided Cuban nation. In this configuration, the grandfather does not appear so much as a dictator or *caudillo*—i.e., a strong-man leader along the lines of a Fidel Castro or a Mas Canosa—as he appears to represent abstract archival authority. To begin with, he determines the collection and preservation of, and access to archival documents between the Cuban and Floridian daughters:

> It is true […] that for the years of my childhood, my grandfather comprised the whole of the world I knew. [W]hat I remember most now are the ordinary markings of growing up […] and the comfort of being part of a group that agreed on important things. Perhaps my grandfather […] had set out to give me a bland and ordinary life; or perhaps that is the life that comes to those who have stopped struggling to make sense of things. (4)

His character only appears in the novel's opening ten pages, to establish the narrator's dilemma in trying to reconnect with her mother. Even in this brief appearance, his personality is clearly developed as amiably timid –"The first night alone in the house, I was unable to fight the feeling that at any minute he would turn a corner and wave in the shy manner he had" (9-10)—and bookish: "he seemed to retreat into the quiet of his

books" (4). He is portrayed as a benign caretaker –"he had managed to give me an uneventful, even pleasant childhood" (4)—whose cruel behavior he doesn't seem to intend and of which he doesn't seem to be aware:

> This rain will be good for the ferns, he said. After a minute, I said, Why? I said it so quietly that he might not have heard me. He sat for a little while and then, pressing his hands against the wooden arms of his chair, he lifted himself up. The sliding glass door behind me opened and shut. (6)

His unthreatening demeanor, which the narrator emphasizes, reinforces the fact that it is the unmindful exercise of his grandfatherly discursive authority, rather than malicious behavior, that is the root cause of the narrator's suffering:

> My throat burned, and the discomfort of it perhaps lent my voice an annoyance I hadn't meant. My grandfather shrugged. Just accept, I continued. With this he turned to me and said, very softly, You have no right to be angry at me. (5)

In short, the grandfather represents archival authority and the underlying land-based, patriarchal national imaginary to which De la Nuez refers and to which Martí's foundational rhetoric of nation contributes. In an interview with Robert Birnbaum, Menéndez elaborates:

> [T]his is our problem. It's not just an exile problem and it's not just an island problem. It's our problem as a people. [….] There is still a very patriarchal streak to our culture. Just on the family level, "Dad is right."

You don't argue with that. If you are going to talk about Dad, you have to whisper.

The narrator's commencement of a traveling life, on the other hand, reflects her desire for her mother as she reclaims the fragment of "La carta en el camino." While the grandfather had treated the scrap of paper primarily as a minor artifact, the narrator translates, to her situation with her mother, the intimate desire of a new, illicit love affair expressed in Neruda's poem. Neruda originally presented the manuscript not for publication but as a gift to his lover Matilde Urrutia during the last evening of a tryst in Nyon, Switzerland in December 1951 (Feinstein 266-67). According to Feinstein, the main idea of the poem is to communicate presence in absence: "Neruda […] wrote the 'Carta en el camino' […] and handed it to Matilde in an envelope, on condition that she did not break the seal and read it until she was on her way to Paris the following day" (267). The narrator of *Loving Che*, as opposed to her grandfather, who had only interacted with the paper as a physical document, internalizes the fragment of Neruda's poem. First, she leans into the note –"I bent down to read by the yellow light of the candle" (9)—and reads it "several times" (9). Then, she immerses herself in the fluidity of Neruda's sanguinary metaphor for travel: "irás adentro / de una gota de sangre que circule en mis venas" (117). The overall poem resonates with the daughter's story, taking on a starkly different connotation when considered in light of her traveling and her desire for her mother:

y como tengo el corazón completo

con la parte de sangre que me diste

para siempre,

y como

llevo las manos llenas de tu ser desnudo,

mírame,

mírame,

mírame por la noche que navego,

y mar y noche son los ojos tuyos.

No he salido de tí cuando me alejo. (118)

The images of blood and of the speaker of the poem leaving an encounter with his beloved with "hands full of your naked being," and still not having "gone out from you" when he goes away—are transformed when imagined as the words of a daughter to her mother. In that case, the composite of images suggests a desire for the preoedipal mother-daughter relationship, in which "girls […] cathected their mothers and saw their fathers as rivals" (Chodorow 95). The blood recalls, for example, in utero nourishment from the placenta, the blood of the mother's labor, and genetic inheritance from the mother as a biological fact, in contrast to the convention of patrilineal genealogy. The full hands suggest nursing and "primary object clinging" –infants' primary need for skin contact— (Chodorow 65); and the formulation "I have not gone out from you when I go away" reads like a summary statement of preoedipal desire. Such an interpretation is in line with the narrator's description of her attraction to the idea of her mother –"in each imagining she grew more beautiful, more exciting"—and her growing resentment for her

grandfather: “The easy respect, the love, I had shared with my grandfather slowly came to be overlaid with frustration and distrust” (4).

Other images from “La carta en el camino” with which the plot and imagery of the first section of *Loving Che* resonate include the navigation of the sea and the night – “mírame por el mar, que voy radiante / mírame por la noche que navego” (118)—the “lemon tree in bloom” as one of the places where love waits –“Te espero […] junto al limonero florecido” (119), in light of the grandfather’s anecdote about Teresa eating lemons from the tree he had planted in Havana (6) —and the closing image of “your name in my mouth”—“y en medio de la vida estaré […] con tu nombre en la boca” (122)—in light of the fact that, besides “La carta en el camino,” the mother’s first name is the only lead that the narrator has to go by when she begins to actively search for her. Finally, the poem’s refrain –“Goodbye, I’ll wait for you”—puts forward the promise that the narrator hopes the note from her mother signifies–“Amor, te espero. / Adiós, amor, te espero. / Adiós, amor, te espero” (122).

3.4 Markings of Cuba’s Special Period in *Loving Che*

After having missed her grandfather’s funeral, the narrator finds herself impulsively traveling to Cuba. Seeing the “red light of sunset” upon landing in Havana triggers the narrator’s realization that she has made the trip “to find my mother” (10). The implied trigger is the image, which the narrator has committed to memory, of “a drop of blood circulating in my veins.” It is the first of the narrator’s several trips to Havana

during which she attempts to find Teresa by random chance, "reciting to anyone who might listen the name of my mother and the three lines that were my only connection to where I had come from" (10). Eventually, she gives up, "exhausted, not only from the uncertainty but from the sadness that I came to understand more clearly with each visit" (10). By the time she ends her series of Cuban travels, she has "met many people and passed out my address to anyone I thought might have known my parents" (10). Together with clues provided later in the novel (183-84, 204, 206, 216), she specifies the novel's opening timeframe and broader context to be Cuba's "Special Period": "Havana […] was really a city of dashed hopes, and everywhere I walked I was reminded that all in life tends to decay and destruction" (10).

The "Special Period in Times of Peace" was declared in the December 30, 1990 edition of Cuba's state newspaper *Granma*. Based on the Cuban government's contingency plans for managing public affairs in the event of an attack, the "Special Period" marked a phase of economic and political adjustment following the collapse of the Soviet economic bloc in 1991. Measures included the rationing of food and fuel, the reduction of work hours, electricity blackouts, and, in general, appeals for sacrifice and resourceful thrift. For example, the Cuban media promoted "such recipes as sweet potato leaf salad, mashed banana peel, and fried grapefruit peel" (Hernández-Reguant 4). At the same time, the Cuban government reformed its socialist constitution "to permit new forms of private and corporate property, regulate foreign investment, turn state companies into for-profit enterprises, and decriminalize the circulation of the U.S. dollar" (Hernández-Reguant 5). The development of an official tourist industry was a reform

that is given credit in particular for reviving the Cuban economy by the late 1990s (Whitfield *Cuban* 7-32). Overall, the Special Period was marked by the opening of a wide range of for-profit cultural exchange involving foreign markets (Hernández-Reguant 13-16), political crackdowns against dissident journalists and activists (Hernández-Reguant 7), economic hardship for Cubans without access to U.S. dollars, and mass emigration.

The fall of Soviet Cuba and the grandfather's death coincide in *Loving Che*. Both events represent, from the narrator's point of view, the painful but potentially productive opening of a window of opportunity for rapprochement between Cuba and Cuban exile, between mother and estranged daughter. Upon her return, she finds that there is a market for travel writing on Cuba and that she is capable of "supporting myself by writing short articles about the places I visited" (10). Back in Florida, she finds steady work as a travel journalist and establishes provisional residence in another small beach town "north of Miami" (10). In this way, she finds that she is able to keep herself distracted, earn an income, and avoid human contact:

> I found that it was possible to write about a city without having to talk to anyone. And I even came to believe that this was a more honest way to work, capturing the purity of place without the complications that human beings tend to introduce. I traveled by myself and returned home alone and after a while decided that the unease that had settled over me would fade with time. (11)

It is at this point that she receives the suspicious package in the mail containing clippings of magazine photographs of Che Guevara and the highly stylized narrative from the individual purporting to be her mother. The writer calls herself Teresa de la Landre and claims to be an artist in Havana. The narrator expresses being overwhelmed by emotion as she opens the box, which overflows with artifacts of desire for her:

> I moved to open it, but my fingers trembled on the box. I had to stop then and close my eyes, and after I had regained my peace, I peeled at one of the sides with my fingernail until the tab came loose. The papers and photographs that spilled out smelled of dark drawers and dusty rooms. Some fell apart when I touched them. Some of the letters were written in such a small hand that it was as if the writer were whispering secrets into my ear. [….] [O]n each rereading I found myself drawn deeper and deeper, until I feared I might lose myself among the pages, might drown in a drop of my own blood. (11-12)

3.5 Interposition of Apocryphal Revolutionary History as Romance Fiction

What follows is an intercalated romance narrative in the voice of Teresa, titled *Loving Che* (13-156). Teresa's text opens during the Special Period, with her account of hearing the narrator recite the entirety of Neruda's *La carta en el camino* at her window. She describes having sent the narrator away following a brief balcony scene:

> The young woman turned her face up and I saw, even by the yellow light of the lamps, that her dark hair was pulled back low and the ends curled around her neck in a style that was familiar to me. [….] She told me her name and said she was looking for a woman who had given up her baby daughter years before. I told her she had the wrong house; that I was nobody. She asked if she might come up and talk. I said I was sorry that she had been misled to my house. [….] I watched her until I could no longer make out her figure in the dusk. (15)

Teresa abruptly displaces the narrator from her text with reference to a ghostly masculine presence: "I remembered another night when the wind sang with ghosts. He lay beside me in the dark, listening" (15). She refers to Ernesto "Che" Guevara, the Argentine-born internationalist guerrilla leader and hero of the Cuban Revolution.

Teresa claims to have sustained an extramarital love affair with Guevara from the time of his arrival in Havana in 1959 (55) until his departure from Cuba in 1964 (124). Her lengthy narrative recounts the putative romance in a nonlinear collection of vignettes –the letters put in order by the Miami-Dade narrator (12)— interspersed with photographs of Guevara and ekphrastic descriptions of other visual media surrounding him. As mentioned previously, the style resembles the purple prose of commercial, paperback U.S. romance fiction. For example: "The knock on the door was rough and hurried, and I died a little to remember the times when he had entered so softly […]. A man I didn't recognize spoke my secret name, the one that only he knew" (120).

Guevara, as the male love interest, is portrayed as a passive, two-dimensional, and nearly mute character in Teresa's narrative. There is a conspicuous effect of artificiality to his character, beginning with his scant dialogue. When his character does speak in her text, the dialogue is an unsettling amalgam of kitschy pillow talk and aphoristic fragments excerpted from the real Guevara's writings and speeches, or a pastiche of such words, which appear stilted in the context of intimate speech:

> He says that the love lives inside the leaving, the knowledge that everything ends. He says to me: When I lie next to you as you sleep, I look at your fluttering eyelids, the down of hair above your lip and I know that nothing lasts, that this very quality sharpens love. Nothing would make life sweeter than knowing the hour of its passing. He kisses me. (110)

Further, *Loving Che*'s Guevara appears for the most part in small, private, and interior spaces with Teresa. For example, he appears in her art studio (96-101, 109, 111, 118-19, 128-29), in the back of a jeep (90-91, 102), on her couch (111) or in her bed (98-99, 118-19, 132, 136-27). He is most often inert, either in a seated position (90-91, 102), kneeling (130) or reclined (98-99, 100-01, 110, 118-19, 131, 147-49). When he is on his feet, the most energetic action he completes is to chase away a frightening pack of stray dogs while out for a walk with Teresa (114-15). Otherwise, he appears walking into her and her husband's "party for the revolution" (53-58), tenderly washing the paint from her hands in her studio (128-29), playing a flirtatious prank on her (135), and watching her undress and then dressing her back up (139).

The vignettes draw selectively from the historiography of the real Guevara. References include Guevara's early travels through South America (132-33); his execution of a government informer within the Cuban guerrilla fighters' ranks, during the time when they were first under attack by the Batista dictatorship's forces in the Sierra Maestra, the mountain range on the eastern side of the island where the revolution began (147-48); the late-1958 guerrilla campaign through the central province of Las Villas that decided the victory of the Revolution, during which Guevara broke his arm before leading the key capture of the city of Santa Clara (55); his involvement with the planning of the 1959 Agrarian Reform, the official Cuban policy of expropriating and nationalizing land owned by multinational corporations (87, 102); and his posts at the top of the appellate bench of the revolutionary tribunal at La Cabaña prison (81-82) and the board of the National Bank of Cuba (110). Such references, however, are subordinate to the romance plot Teresa develops. First, they underscore Teresa's sense of unique worth and status as an individual:

> There he stands at the front door, his arm still in a cast. Walking through the door ahead of the others, his hair greasy, his uniform dirty, walking, eyes ablaze. [….] Ernesto took my hand and kissed it. (55-57)

Next, they serve the structural logic of romance fiction wherein, as Radway describes the convention of the genre, "a gradually developing love" is portrayed, the narrative that unfolds elaborating "the slow process by which two people become acquainted, explore each other's foibles, wonder about the other's feelings, and eventually 'discover' that they are loved by the other" ("Women" 64).

Teresa is at first simultaneously fascinated and repulsed by Guevara, whom she observes from a distance: e.g., "I stand across the harbor and look on La Cabaña" (81), "I had let this Argentine with his funny accent and mocking smile humiliate me. He smelled like a beast of the forest" (69), and "Two days later I go to the university, where he is to give a speech" (89). Guevara and Teresa begin to engage in lively, back-and-forth conversation in which Teresa holds her own, displaying wit, acuity, and boldness. An example is the fast-paced dialogue on the topic of an expropriated car:

> And this car, I say, where is it from?
>
> We recovered it from La Cabaña.
>
> Recovered?
>
> Yes, he says, we took it back. You can say stolen if that is what you like. (102)

The last, defensive line of Guevara's side of the argument is taken from his televised, 23 March 1960 speech, "Political Sovereignty and Economic Independence," cited in Jon Lee Anderson (468-69). Here, an excerpt from Guevara's monologue for dissemination by the mass medium of television is put into the context of a spirited, close exchange between the heroine and Guevara, who are falling in love in spite of themselves. Finally, in Teresa's text, Guevara begins to bare his soul about past deeds as a sign of intimate trust and respect. For example, referring to the execution of the government informer Eutimio Guerra:

> I prop myself up on my elbow. [….] Ernesto opens his eyes. Eutimio was down on his knees. He asked quietly to be shot. [….] Ernesto pauses and

> turns to me. No one knows this, he says. [….] There was nothing I could do. I had to end the problem myself, do you understand, Teresa? [….] He leans toward me and whispers. Exit orifice in the right temporal. [….] We lie together, distant thunder closing in on the city. Neither of us speaks now. I rest my head against his back and listen to his breathing. (149)

The displacement of Teresa's daughter from her packet of letters culminates in her explanation of why she had sent the daughter into exile with the fragment of Neruda's "La carta en el camino" pinned to her sweater. According to Teresa, it had been Guevara who had left her a copy of the poem before his 1964 departure to, first, Congo and, finally, to Prague and Bolivia, where he was captured and killed in 1967:

> A man I didn't recognize spoke my secret name, the one that only he knew. He handed me a letter. After he left, I held the envelope in my hand for long moments. I wanted to wait. But I couldn't, and slowly I tore the seal:
>
> Adored on, I am off to my fighting.
> I shall scratch the earth to make you a cave
> and there your Captain
> will wait for you with flowers in the bed. (120)

Unlike the framing narrator of *Loving Che*, who reads in Neruda's poem the desire between mother and daughter, Teresa focuses on the masculine, military, and telluric imagery of the poem. Just as details of the narrator's life imbue the poem with

resonance of her desire for her mother, Neruda's poem "La carta en el camino" contains passages of male bravado that recall the mythology of Guevara as egalitarian liberator and war hero of socialist Cuba:

> mi tierra será tuya,
>
> yo voy a conquistarla,
>
> no sólo para dártela,
>
> sino que para todos,
>
> para todo mi pueblo.
>
> Saldrá el ladrón de su torre algún día.
>
> Y el invasor será expulsado.
>
> Todos los frutos de la vida
>
> crecerán en mis manos
>
> acostumbrados antes a la pólvora. (*Versos del capitán* 118)

In the version presented in the packet of letters, the desire for the virile, nationalistic myth of the guerrilla warrior is the aspect of Neruda's poem that is emphasized. This is in contrast with the framing narrator's more simple and personal desire for her mother. Moreover, Teresa closes her narrative with the claim that her daughter, the Miami-Dade narrator, is the love child of the purported affair with Guevara. Teresa explains that her decision to cultivate a mother-daughter relationship with her was pending Guevara's return:

> Someday I would give you a good life. Someday when my lover returned.
>
> Someday I would become your mother. I was waiting. I sent you away

> from this island so that you might be free of its sounds and sweet airs. I was waiting. How could I have been of help to you? Already, I read him in every move of your hands, smelled him on your sweet baby's breath. When you cried at night, I lay remembering the lost afternoons, how time had wrapped its eternity around us. (154)

With the interposition of the romance fiction of Teresa and Guevara, the narrator's search for her mother is diverted by the novel's second patriarchal figure, one of the "great villains" of Cuban exile history and one of the "great men" of socialist Cuban history. Moreover, the narrator encounters the apocryphal history of Guevara during the 1990s, when, according to Rafael Rojas, Cuban cultural policy toward history shifted from Marxist-Leninism to the less rigorous, "great man"-derived approach to "revolutionary nationalist" history, recuperating the feats of national heroes from Martí to a radically revised version of Che Guevara (*Essays* 144-47). At the same time, histories written by anti-Castro exiles were being overshadowed by scholarly works by such younger U.S. Cuban historians as Jorge I. Domínguez, Carmelo Mesa Lago, Louis A. Pérez, Jr., Marifeli Pérez Stable, Damián Fernández, and Alejandro de la Fuente (*Essays* 150). Rojas observes the distinct trends in Cuban and Cuban exile historiography as factors facilitating "new signs of reconciliation" during the 1990s, citing such collaborative efforts between Cuban intellectuals on and off the island as the Olof Palme Institute seminar, The Bipolarity of Cuban Culture (1994), the emergence of the Madrid-based journal *Encuentro de la cultura cubana* (1996), and academic exchanges through

the Cuban Research Institute at Florida International University and the Bildner Center at the City University of New York (149-50).

3.6 Reader Response and the Popular Romance Frame

The novel's third and final section, *Letter on the Road* (158-228), titled after the Neruda poem, presents the narrator's response to Teresa's text. First, she is stunned. Having hoped to reestablish contact with her mother, she instead finds her search dominated by need to find out the truth about her father. Her first reaction is to conceal the letters on the grounds of the threat that becoming known as Che Guevara's illegitimate daughter would pose to her ethnic standing as a Florida Cuban:

> I was not so removed from exile chatter that I didn't understand the implications of her story. [….] [H]ere, an association with the revolution was something to be hidden, denied, and ultimately forgotten. [….] I carefully restacked Teresa's letters and photographs. Barely aware of what I was doing, I packed them back in their box. I sealed the edges of the package with masking tape and then I found a length of twine and wrapped it tight. I pushed the box into a closet, setting it on the highest shelf. (158)

The narrator's ecstatic act of spilling out the pile of documents that, in the first section, she had hoped amounted to a series of love letters from her mother (10), is thus mirrored by a scene of suppression owing to the narrator's fear of being shamed and threatened by

purported identity of her biological father. Having set the box away, she again associates the related problems of nation and paternity with her grandfather and decides to drive by his old house (158). The narrator's sets the scene of the old neighborhood as an eerie ghost town, emphasizing the lack of any sign of traffic or activity:

> It was late afternoon, but the street was deserted. I parked across from the house. The driveway was empty and the blinds had been pulled down shut. (158)

She takes note of the landscaping –"Someone had planted red geraniums under the windowsills and the lawn was trim and green" (158)—and promptly falls asleep: "I dozed for a while in the heat. When I awoke it was getting on toward evening" (158-59). When she wakes up, "toward evening," she has a vision of "the figure of a small boy walking slowly up the sidewalk toward me" (159). The description of the boy matches published photographs of Ernesto Guevara as a boy dressed up for primary school, superimposed with the adult Guevara's scowl in the iconic photograph taken in March 1960 by "Korda" Alberto Díaz:

> He was dressed quite formally for the heat, in long shorts and a white shirt whose short, wide sleeves only emphasized the thinness of his arms. The purpose with which he walked –leaning slightly forward from the waist—made me think that he was small for his age […] but even with the distance I could make out the furrow in his brow. His black hair kept falling into his face as he walked and now and then he swept it away angrily with one hand. I watched him, barely able to move. [….] He

> stopped at the sidewalk in front of the house. He turned and looked at me. I sat very still. A minute passed, maybe two. Then he took his gaze away and started walking again […]. When his tiny figure turned in the distance and vanished, I rolled up my window and drove away from the house. (159)

The next morning following the ghostly encounters with the memory of her grandfather and the apparition of the little boy who reminds her of Guevara, whom she considers to be possibly her father, she retrieves Teresa's package and rereads her text for the next several days (159). She allows herself to escape into the fantasy of the story, identifying with Teresa as romantic heroine: "[B]efore long, the cadence of her voice began to invade my dreams. Her impossible life began to seem more real to me than my own" (160). The terms of the reading resemble the way that, according to Radway's study, readers of romance fiction describe seeking literal and figurative escape:

> In attending to the women's comments about the worth of romance reading, I was particularly struck by the fact that they tended to use the word escape in two distinct ways. On the one hand they used the term literally to describe the act of denying the present, which they believe they accomplish each time they begin to read a book and are drawn to its story. On the other hand, they used the word in a more figurative fashion to give substance to the somewhat vague but nonetheless intense sense of relief they experience by identifying with a heroine whose life does not resemble their own […]. (Radway, *Reading* 90)

Radway finds that the romance reader's expectation is "to construct a fantasy-world where she is attended, as the heroine is, by a man who reassures her of her special status and unique identity" ("Women" 62). The male love interest in romance fiction is interpreted as a narrative site of cathexis for the heroine's "emptiness and desire" resulting from the sense of lost intimate bonds with her mother:

> [T]he heroine's loss of connections and identity is more deeply resonant in a psychoanalytic sense than it is overtly topical. When she is plucked from her earlier relationships and thrust out into a public world, the heroine's consequent terror and feeling of emptiness most likely evokes for the reader distant memories of her initial separation from her mother and her later ambivalent attempts to establish an individual identity. At the same time, it symbolically represents in a more general sense what it feels like for a woman to be alone without the necessary relation to another. As a consequence, the romance's opening exaggerates the feeling of emptiness and desire that sent the reader to the book in the first place. (*Reading* 138)

She additionally identifies the expectation of readers to achieve figurative mental escape in oppressive male-dominated domestic situations ("Women" 59, *Reading* 90), "fueled by dissatisfaction and disaffection […] with woman's lot" ("Women" 67). Finally, she remarks on the occurrence of readers who use romance fiction to rehearse a rhetoric of reinterpretation, e.g., relating the trope of male characters who seem cruel but are actually good men to abusive spouses ("Women" 67).

The crux of *Loving Che* is the narrator's decision about how to read Teresa's text. On an extradiagetic level, the double framing of romance in *Loving Che* –Teresa's desire for the Carlyle-type "Able Great Man of Cuban history," framed within the reader's desire for and strange seduction by her mother—is connected with postmodern approaches to historicity through the frame of romance fiction, e.g., as explored in Strehle and Carden's *Doubled Plots: Romance and History* (2003). According to Strehle and Carden, "romanced history" presents "history […] turned from the public and civic realm of authoritative truth to the private realm of a text interpreted in the light of the reader's desire" (xxiv).

The narrator "writes beyond" Teresa's story, "imagining alternate forms of integration and satisfaction" (Strehle and Carden 5), beyond romantic fantasy and national or ethnic identification. She accomplishes this, first, through intensive research on and off the island and, second, by setting out on her own, having found the history staged as romance to be both false and unnecessary. Beyond identity history, the narrator is concerned with the material factors shaping the everyday motivations of her informants and preventing rapprochement between island and exile. She posits a counterpoint between the lacking, less rigorous "great man" history resurgent on and off the island following the collapse of the Soviet Union, and more pluralistic investigation that focuses on smaller stories, with appropriate attention to economic factors, in essence putting forth an argument for a human interest, if not materialist, basis for historiography, as opposed to Carlyle. With regard to desire in the post-Soviet historiography of Guevara, the narrator appropriates the version of Guevara as an inquisitive, rootless traveler that she

finds, by chance, in the photograph of the rebel with a camera around his neck during the earliest, most hopeful days of the Revolution (226).

3.7 "Great Man" Historiography in *Loving Che*

Menéndez's Cuba-related narrative fiction –the collection of short stories *In Cuba I Was a German Shepherd* (2001) and *Loving Che* (2003)—references work by and about "great men" in Cuban literature and history with subtle, analytic depth. Beyond Martí, who is a recurrent presence (Menéndez, *In Cuba* 14, *Loving Che* 39, 59, 79, 144, 172, 189), examples include mid-twentieth-century reformist politician Eduardo Chibás (*Loving Che* 33-34), writer Guillermo Cabrera Infante (*Loving Che* 26), martyred urban, student rebel leader José Antonio Echeverría (*Loving Che* 43-44), patriarch of the Cuban Revolution, Fidel Castro (Menéndez, *In Cuba* 127-40, *Loving Che* 165-66), and the sainted or demonized hero or villain of 1960s Cuba, Ernesto "Che" Guevara. In the case of Guevara, the mythology and historiography surrounding whom pervades *Loving Che*, Menéndez examines the revision –following the fall of the Soviet Union—of patriarchal discourses in Cuba and in the Miami-Dade exile underlying claims to national authenticity, with emphasis on the rhetorical performance of Guevara's masculinity, in official Cuban discourse, or feminization as part of his demonization by Cuban exile activists.

The "great man" theory of historiography derives from the Romantic emphasis on exceptional men –especially heroes and geniuses— in the shaping of crucial events

and ideas in History, which is conceived in monolithic, Eurocentric terms. In this paradigm, the Great Men are distinguished from and are supposed to determine the range of possibility and fates available to the general, anonymous "mass of men." The theory was most famously articulated in Thomas Carlyle's series of lectures *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History* (1840):

> [A]s I take it, Universal History, the history of what man has accomplished in this world, is at bottom the History of the Great Men who have worked here. They were the leaders of men, these great ones; the modelers, patterns, and in wide sense creators, of whatsoever the general mass of men contrived to do or to attain; all things that we see standing accomplished in the world are properly the outer material result, the practical realization and embodiment, of Thoughts that dwelt in the Great Men sent into the world: the soul of the whole world's history, it may justly be considered, were the history of these. (1-2)

More specifically, for Carlyle, the universal "love [of] great men" is the engine of "Universal History," transcending the temporal and positing the prophetic and spiritual above empirical fact:

> We all love great men; love, venerate and bow down submissive before great men: nay, can we honestly bow down to anything else? Ah, does not every true man feel that he is himself made higher by doing reverence to what is really above him? [….] [T]o me it is very cheering to consider that no skeptical logic, or general triviality, insincerity and aridity of any

> Time and its influences can destroy this noble inborn loyalty and worship that is in man. (16)

Carlyle's lectures cover the hero as prophet, poet, priest, "man of letters," and culminate with "the hero as king," presenting the ruling warrior as the ultimate Great Man on the grounds of his will to power and ability to rule as a commanding, teaching, and advising authority:

> The Commander over Men: he to whose will our wills are to be subordinated, and loyally surrender themselves, and find their welfare in doing so, may be reckoned the most important of Great Men. He is practically the summary for us of all the various figures of Heroism […] whatsoever of earthly or of spiritual dignity we can fancy to reside in a man, embodies itself here, to command over us, to furnish us with constant practical teaching, to tell us for the day and hour what we are to do. He is called *Rex,* Regulator, *Roi*: our own name is still better; King, *Könning*, which means *Can*-ning, Able-man. (217)

Revolution, according to Carlyle, arises from the natural need to depose and replace a ruler who has usurped the position of the Great Man, having proven to be impotent, an "*Un* able man" (219). Carlyle illustrates the work of a ruler with the phallic metaphor of building vertically –"Brick must lie on brick as it may and can"—the unguided masses as a horizontal, prostrate, and creeping ooze –"quack […] must adjust himself with quack, in all manner of administration of human things […] which accordingly lie unadministered, fermenting into unmeasured masses of failure […] miserable millions

stretch out the hand for their due supply, and it is not there"—and compares revolution to the "law of gravitation": "The miserable millions burst forth into […] madness: bricks and bricklayer lie as in a fatal chaos!" (219). The natural order, for Carlyle, of authoritarian rule by an able Great Man is phallogonic. It stems from the belief that the masses' irrational but, for Carlyle, correct need to submit to rule by such a man and to depose the "Unable Simulacrum of Ability" (219) reflects the divine order and demands of the Christian God. In expressing this belief, Carlyle denies Enlightenment rationalism as the basis for the French Revolution, arguing that, rather, revolution responds to the innate human moral need for obedience to an authentic, able sovereign authority:

> [I]t is false altogether, what the last Sceptical Century taught us, that this world is a steam-engine. There is a God in this world; and a God's sanction, or else the violation of such, does look out from all ruling and obedience, from all moral acts of men. There is no act more moral between men than that of rule and obedience. Woe to him that claims obedience when it is not due; woe to him that refuses it when it is! (220)

Carlyle's argument in favor of authoritarian rule by and veneration of heroes, as well as his philosophical outlook on the steering of the course of historical events by Great Men, are ideas based on the religious view of male authority and female submission as a divinely ordained extension of believers' obedience to God. The biblical basis for Carlyle's line of reasoning is found, for example, in Eph. 5.22-33:

> Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the

> Church: and he is the saviour of the body. [….] So ought men to love their wives, as their own bodies: he that loveth his wife, loveth himself. [….] For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.

On these grounds, Carlyle mocks at the same time Enlightenment rationalism and the anti-authoritarian view of the French revolutionaries who believed that democratic rule was desirable and possible. What Carlyle finds outrageous is the premise that nature would become "as if effete," ceasing to produce the Great Men that would advance history:

> Hero-worship would have sounded very strange to those workers and fighters in the French Revolution. Not reverence for Great Men; not any hope or belief, or even wish, that Great Men could again appear in the world! Nature, turned into a "Machine," was as if effete now; could not any longer produce Great Men: I can tell her, she may give up the trade altogether, then: we cannot do without Great Men! (224)

Carlyle's "Great Man" philosophical approach to history, followed by the chronological narrative historiography "as inspired by the teaching and example of Leopold von Ranke" (Hobsbawm 186), was, by the end of the nineteenth century, surpassed by Marx's materialist conception of history. The materialist approach was adopted as the standard for scholarly rigor during the late-nineteenth-century development of historiography as a discipline in the social sciences (Hobsbawm 42-187). In particular, Marx's model of the relationship between material foundations –i.e., the forces and relations of production, involving labor, capital, and resources—and superstructure –cultural production,

ideology, political developments, ideas of morality: the stuff of society—(Marx 159-60) was key in the sea change in historiography "away from description and narrative to analysis and explanation; from concentrating on the unique and individual to establishing regularities and to generalization" (Hobsbawm 84). Outside of the academic field of historiography, however, the "Great Man" theory of history continues to be influential in demagogic appeals to common wisdom, especially to serve the purposes of legitimizing "nationalist or ethnic or fundamentalist ideologies" (Hobsbawm 6).

In the contentious historiography surrounding the 1959 Cuban revolution, appeals to"Great Man"-type history have been common in the discourse of both Cuban and Cuban exile politicians (De la Torre 90-91, Franqui 13-14, Miller 161). In the wake of the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, the emphasis on the *machista* construction of masculinity in such discourse has become more pronounced. This is on account of the need to revise, in both Cuban exile and Cuban politics, the "Great Men" historical narratives to fit a post-Cold War frame. In the U.S. Cuban exile, as Rojas observes, there is, since the end of the Cold War, a "virtual absence of armed opposition groups in the Cuban exile community and a widespread preference for peaceful regime change from within" (*Essays* 149). Likewise, the 1997 death of Jorge Mas Canosa, the director of the Cuban American National Foundation (CANF) since 1981, occasioned a reevaluation of the leader and his organization. Prior to 1991, the view of Mas Canosa was that he was the de facto president of post-Castro Cuba and CANF would become the majority Cuban political party of the future (Mas Canosa, "20 de mayo" 382). The cases of the redefinition of such Cuban exile Cold War-era militants as the Brigada 2506 –the C.I.A.-

trained paramilitary unit of Cuban exiles that carried out the failed Bay of Pigs invasion in 1961— and Cuban exile C.I.A. agents in Latin America –e.g., Felix Ramos Rodríguez- - are in particular linked to the redefinition of Guevara as a "great villain" in the U.S. Cuban exile (Fontova, Ros). Beginning with the Special Period and culminating in the thirtieth anniversary of his execution in Bolivia, Guevara has served as a multipurpose hero for socialist Cuba.

In the U.S. Cuban exile, the encomiastic history of such anti-Castro warriors as the Brigada 2506 has become the narrow province of an increasingly marginalized hard-right-wing faction. From the 1990s to the late 2000s, there has been a sea change in U.S. Cuban public opinion toward dialogue and reconciliation with socialist Cuba and against U.S. policy isolating Cuba (Cuban Study Group) as well as a general "abandonment of the topic of the illegitimacy of the Revolution" in U.S. Cuban historical scholarship (Rojas 126). The death of Mas Canosa, combined with the persistence of socialist Cuba in the wake of the island's post-Soviet economic and accompanying refugee crises contributed to the transition and fragmentation in Cuban exile politics. Right-wing Cuban exile rhetoric began to merge with U.S. right-wing discourse and media outlets throughout the 2000s. For example, New Orleans-based Cuban exile pundit Humberto Fontova now writes for the *Weekly Standard* and appears as a regular commentator on the Fox News Channel.

In the transition, the legend of Brigada 2506 has been recast. Rather than being hailed as defenders of the authentic Cuban nation against Soviet internationalist incursion, the veterans of the Bay of Pigs invasion are compared to and described in

terms of U.S. World War II veterans of the Battle of the Bulge, Iwo Jima, and the Normandy Invasion (Fontova 55-61). Fontova refers to them, for example, by appropriating two encomiastic catchphrases recently associated with World War II veterans in U.S. mass media discourse, as "Cuba's Greatest Generation" (xiii) and as a "Band of Brothers" (xiv, 58). Defenders of socialist Cuba, on the other hand, are compared to Nazis (Fontova 4, 26-27, 53, 55, 70, 92-93, 113, 193) and Al Qaeda (4-9, 108). The masculinity of the Great Men is emphasized in contrast to the equally re-imagined caricature of Che Guevara in the new right-wing exile discourse. While during the Cold War, Guevara was condemned as a Bolshevik thug (Scauzillo 56), now he serves as a terroristic, demonic, and, above all, cowardly and unmanly contrast to his contemporary Cuban exile militants (Ros 119-20, 143, 197; Fontova 109), and to early-2000s U.S. politicians promoting the "War on Terror" (Fontova 7).

In post-Soviet Cuba, the political transition was motivated by the continuity of the regime structure and the accomplishments of socialism amid severe economic hardship and characterized by fluctuations between reform and repression of dissent. In terms of historiography, the most crucial change was the shift in official Cuban cultural policy "from Marxist-Leninism to revolutionary nationalism" (Rojas 144). The emphasis on the heroes of the Cuban Revolution, on which Franqui and Cabrera Infante, among others, had commented from the early-1970s, became more pronounced as post-Soviet Cuban historical discourse became "anti-capitalist in orientation and rhetoric but not Marxist in methodology" (Miller 148). The invention of the paradigm of "revolutionary nationalism" was accompanied by the liberalization of economic policies. Reforms

included the legalization of the dollar and small-scale private enterprises, the breakup of large state-run plantations and the rise of agricultural cooperatives and farmer's markets, and joint ventures with foreign multinational companies to promote a tourist industry in Cuba (Snodgrass 205). The reforms occurred concurrently with waves of intensified political repression and cultural censorship, e.g., the imprisonment of twenty-nine journalists and ten librarians in March 2003 (Rojas 144, Snodgrass 205).

The mythology surrounding Che Guevara was transformed in post-Soviet Cuba, as well. He was "enlisted […] as a national martyr and prophet of the post-Soviet 'revolutionary nationalist' period" (Zimmerman 200). An example of this is found in Fidel Castro's speech at the main Santa Clara rally surrounding the interment of Che's body in Cuba on 17 Oct. 1997. Guevara's remains had been discovered at an airstrip in La Higuera, Bolivia, and delivered to Cuba by the Bolivian government. In the speech, Castro expresses appreciation for the symbolic "return" of Guevara "por venir reforzarnos en esta difícil lucha que estamos librando hoy para salvar las ideas por las cuales tanto luchaste, para salvar la Revolución, la patria y las conquistas del socialismo, que es parte realizada de los grandes sueños que albergaste." Castro enumerates Guevara's exemplary moral virtues as national virtues for Cubans to emulate during the difficult period of post-Soviet transition: "su profundo sentido humanista […] su valentía personal […] su voluntad de acero […] su sentido del honor y la dignidad […] su fe en el hombre […] su optimismo."

In emerging "revolutionary nationalist" discourse, Guevara serves "as a [critical] metonym for all the Soviet regime's grave political errors, arbitrary measures, and

intellectual deformities" (Miller 158). Zimmerman cites the analysis of Cuban National Assembly President Ricardo Alarcón:

> [A]t a University of Havana symposium titled "Che, Hombre del Siglo XXI," […] Alarcón argued that Guevara understood better than anyone the problems that would lead to crisis in the Soviet government and economy in the late 1980s. Alarcón also suggested that Cubans would not have been so traumatized by the collapse of the Soviet Union if they had been paying more attention to Che´s writing on the subject. (200)

Such official discourse is in contrast to the Cold War-era, Marxist-Leninist emphasis on Guevara as a martyr of proletarian internationalism. By way of contrastive example to Castro's 17 Oct. 1997 speech, Castro had proclaimed in his original 18 Oct. 1967 eulogy of Guevara that:

> Che llevó las ideas del marxismo-leninismo a su expresión más fresca, más pura, más revolucionaria. ¡Ningún hombre como él en estos tiempos ha llevado a su nivel más alto el espíritu internacionalista proletario! ("Hasta" 22)

The boom in Guevara-related scholarship surrounding the 1997 thirty-year anniversary of his death –he was captured and executed while attempting to mount a guerrilla campaign in Bolivia—both colludes and corrects some aspects of the post-Soviet Cuban "Great Man" historiography on the island and in Cuban exile. Zimmerman observes that the proliferation of scholarly publications on Guevara in 1997 was framed by emerging post-Soviet Cuban historiography: "The Che literature […] falls into place

within the sizable body of new books and articles seeking to explain the longevity of the socialist government of Cuba and the contradictory nature of Cuban economic and political life today" (Zimmerman 198). Much new research was specifically made possible by the Cuban government's selective release of "previously classified materials" on Guevara: a "secret Guevara manuscript on the 1965 Congo campaign" delivered to Mexican novelist and Guevara biographer Paco Ignacio Taibo II; access granted to U.S. journalist and biographer Jon Lee Anderson to Guevara's widow Aleida March's collection of unpublished writings, and interviews given by many of his surviving associates, at the government's promping, e.g., interviews by Miguel Piñeiro, "the notorious 'Red Beard' and longtime Cuban intelligence chief" (Zimmerman 198-99).

Three major biographies of Guevara were published in 1997: Castañeda's *Compañero: The Life and Death of Che Guevara,* Anderson's *Che Guevara: A Revolutionary Life,* and Taibo's *Ernesto Guevara también conocido como el Che.* Zimmerman considers Anderson's biography to be "the […] best-researched of the 1997 biographies," for its sources including "unpublished diaries, letters, and other writings to which Aleida March gave […] exclusive access" and interviews with "dozens of allies and enemies of Che" in Argentina, Cuba, Moscow, Bolivia, and the United States (Zimmerman 202). Anderson's work presents an epic narrative emphasizing Guevara's idealism, audacity, commitment, and sacrifice. The composite portrait resonates with the iconic image of Guevara based on the famous March 1960 photograph by "Korda" Alberto Díaz:

> Forever youthful, brave, implacable, and defiant, perpetually staring out with those eyes full of purpose, Che has defied death. As even his closest friends and comrades wilt with age or succumb to the comfort of a life where "*la revolución*" no longer has a place, Che remains unalterable. He is immortal because others want him to be, as the solitary example of the New Man who once lived and dared others to follow. (754)

Anderson presents Guevara's life in terms of a conversion narrative, whose turning point is the chapter "Finding North," relating Guevara's "political conversion" in the quasi-religious "revelation" narrative described in the "Note on the Margin" to his *Notas de viaje* en route to Guatemala in 1953 (122-23). At the same time, however, Anderson's biography presents an array of new information on Guevara's personal life and foibles that contribute to the work's humanization of the legend. Details include Guevara's habitual recitation of poetry by Pablo Neruda as part of his lifelong method of seducing lovers, beginning with a 1945-46 tryst with his cousin Carmen Córdova Iturburu de la Serna (36). In fact, Anderson's biography pays a considerable deal of attention to Guevara's active sex life (35, 100n, 103, 117, 119, 126, 129, 131, 311, 572).

Zimmerman deems Castañeda's biography of Guevara "the most argument-driven of the three […], the most interpretive, and the most hostile to Guevara and the Cuban Revolution" (202). Castañeda's sources are dominated by political enemies, e.g., CIA archival materials and reports from the British Foreign Office and U.S. State Department. Castañeda presents the chronicle of Guevara as an obnoxious, dangerous failure whose life story is, at best, a relic of the idealistic sixties (xv). He departs from the neoliberal

premise that free-market capitalism has inevitably and irrevocably triumphed in the global order:

> Che's ideas, his life and opus, even his example belong to the past. As such, they will never be current again. [….] The main theoretical and political doctrines associated with Che […] are virtually meaningless today. The Cuban Revolution –his greatest triumph and truest success—is now disintegrating, and lingers on thanks only to a wholesale rejection of Guevara's ideological heritage. (xvi)

Finally, Taibo allows "his subject to tell his own story to an unusual extent," and his sources include "some two dozen informants, most of them Che's supporters. *Guevara* […] features the most complete bibliography of the three […] biographies (Zimmerman 202). Taibo presents an admiring, humanizing portrait of Guevara as an idealistic, informal, irreverent, egalitarian, and endearingly imprudent individual through a life of triumphs and well-intended failures:

> El Che fue desde su primera juventud un aventurero, vagabundo y romántico. [….] Romántico: aquel que acaricia las ideas amorosamente, las ideas más allá de su viabilidad. Vagabundo: aquel que concibe el mundo como un escenario de viaje permanente en el que no hay que apoltronarse y detenerse. Aventurero: aquel que concibe la vida como una aventura cuyas consecuencias resultan incalculables. (14)

Menéndez cites the Anderson, Castañeda, and Taibo biographies as sources for "Teresa's story" in the afterword to *Loving Che* titled "Notes" (229). As such, the novel

invites a comparative reading between the fiction and the three identified sources. As we will explore during the remainder of the chapter, the source material on Guevara –as a function of the Great Man histories revised on the island and in exile following the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War—is subject to implicit critique within the construction of Teresa's fictional narrative. With the indicated insertion of material from the internationally-bestselling 1997 biographies of Guevara in *Loving Che*, produced by major writers based in either New York City (Anderson) or Mexico City (Castañeda and Taibo), the factor of globalization is brought explored with respect to the staging of the Cuban Revolution as romance in the novel. Moreover, the focus on the heroic figure of Guevara on the island, on the heroic figure of the Cuban exile militants pitted against the Revolution and Guevara in exile, and on the larger-than-life romantic quality of Guevara on the multinational publishing market, is subverted by the novel's implied critique of the "great man" approach.

3.8 Historical and Literary Sources for Guevara and the Cuban Revolution in *Loving Che*

In this section, I briefly examine the management of historical source material in *Loving Che*, considering the novel within the framework of Latin American archival fiction. Specifically, I trace sources for the portrayal of Guevara, as well as the events leading up to the Cuban Revolution in the broader composition of Teresa's text, in the novel's "grab-bag approach to history" (González Echevarría, *Myth* 34). On account of

the explicit citation of the three major 1997 Guevara biographies in the novel's afterword, I begin with the question: in what particulars does Teresa's story "draw on" the works (229)?

First, Anderson's overall epic approach to Guevara's biography is both "vampirized" and subverted in Teresa's text. Details that provide color in Anderson – Guevara's romanticism, his preference for intelligent, creative women, his lifelong fascination with Neruda's poetry—are emphasized, while Anderson's thesis that Guevara was driven by resolute commitment to Communist ideology, following his abrupt conversion to Soviet-style Marxist-Leninism in 1953, is contradicted by the novel's references to Anderson's own research. First, Teresa's daydream about Guevara at work in La Cabaña, which, as she recounts gazing across the harbor at the prison fortress (81-82), makes reference to "Duque": "He has just finished a trial, is sitting next to Duque on the bench" (81). This is Miguel Ángel Duque de Estrada, the man in charge of the Revolution's Comisión de Depuración, who is Anderson's first-hand source for information on the trials and executions carried out at La Cabaña. Neither Taibo nor Castañeda had access to Duque de Estrada. Teresa's text, in an uncharacteristically political moment, presents Che's work at La Cabaña in a light that is consistent with Anderson's overall thesis: "So many prisoners, hundreds, thousands, some without names, some who beg, eyes red before him; some who stand still and straight, already dead. I watch their hands, pale and trembling, watch them walk slowly toward him as if they were afraid of tripping." (81-82)

Anderson's text provides a reminder of the context for the military tribunals: the job was "to cleanse the defeated army" (386), in other words, to prevent former Cuban military from staging a coup like the one Guevara had witnessed first-hand in Guatemala in 1954. According to Duque's explanation, Guevara was considerably less involved in the trials than the reader is led to believe in Teresa's text: "In about one hundred days we carried out about fifty-five executions by firing squad, and we got a lot of flak for it, but we gave each case due and fair consideration and we didn't come to our decisions lightly. [….] [Our] paramount concerns were [to ensure] that the sense of revolutionary morality and justice prevailed, that no injustice was committed. In that, Che was very careful." (Anderson 387)

The second contradictory reference made to Anderson in Teresa's text is to Guevara's 1959 university addresses to communicate the regime's message on the end of university autonomy (89). Like the reference to the military tribunals, this situation – Teresa attends Guevara's speech at an unspecified university—occurs in the structure of the romance narrative where the heroine is standoffish against the male romantic interest, not having learned yet the "real reasons" for his behaviors and reinterpreting his actions accordingly (Radway 134). The description of the speech in Teresa's text grotesquely refers to "the throng of bodies" in attendance (89). Anderson, as in the case of La Cabaña, interprets Guevara's motivation for a controversial action as pragmatic rather than ideological: "Central planning was necessary, Cuba was going to industrialize, and it needed qualified technicians –agronomists, agricultural teachers, and chemical engineers—not a new crop of more lawyers" (449). Such a discrepancy reinforces and

stages, on an extradiagetic level, the process of reinterpretation of motives and actions that at first seem to the heroine of the romance fiction to be abusive. A metacritical parallel is drawn between a romantic heroine falling for her male love interest and the interpretive crafting of a for-profit "great man" history such as Anderson's, which involves the economies of desire in which both the biographer's "revolutionary nationalist" sources and the international publishing markets are invested.

Finally, Teresa's text contradicts Anderson's more characteristic emphasis on Guevara's outsider status to Cuban culture, which Anderson illustrates with anecdotal information about Guevara's alleged dislike of parties and social events: "He didn't like parties –a Cuban national pastime—and rarely invited people to his home, or went to theirs, for that matter" (570). In *Loving Che*, Guevara is supposed to have met Teresa dropping by her and her husband's "party for the revolution" (53) and, before the two putatively become lovers, he sends his compliments by way of a messenger (60) and pays a casual social call (65-68).

Castañeda's work seems to appear in *Loving Che* only to provide the bases for Dr. Caraballo's negation of "Teresa"'s story during the narrator's office visit (172-75). The narrator visits her former professor of Cuban history at the University of Miami to consult with her on the packet of letters and photographs she has received. The professor expresses disappointment in the packet of letters and implicitly accuses the narrator of having forged them (172-73). She finds the document to be an unacceptable fiction, on the grounds that it provides no useful information for the demonization of Guevara and the Revolution. On factual grounds, she cites Guevara's love affair with Lilia Rosa

Pérez, which had resulted in a child out of wedlock (174). Castañeda is the source for this information (264-65), by which Caraballo concludes that Teresa's text is a fictional "love story" (*Loving Che* 174). Her reasoning seems to be somewhat circular and arbitrary in reaching this conclusion. Lilia gave birth to a boy in "1963 or 1964," Caraballo points out (174). Why couldn't Guevara have had more than one child during the same year? Caraballo's second reason is more illustrative of the way that she constructs her knowledge of Guevara on an *a priori* basis. In Castañeda's account, Guevara had met Pérez in the prison fortress of La Cabaña. This fits Caraballo's schema: Guevara belongs in the setting of La Cabaña, as Cuba's chief executioner, for example. Revolutionaries do not, on the contrary, belong in the formerly wealthy neighborhood of El Vedado (174). Second, Castañeda's chronology for Guevara's involvement in a secret "Tarará Group," (mid-January through May, 1959), during which time Guevara was supposed to have been overseeing the plans for Agrarian Reform, state security (secret police, the army's G-2)—and internationalist training and support (Castañeda 146-52) contradicts the timeline of Teresa's story. When Caraballo cites "some errors in the dates" (174), Castañeda's biography seems to provide the basis. Finally, and most importantly, Caraballo objects to the "omissions" in Teresa's text (174). Caraballo expected to find corroborative information portraying Che as an anti-democratic sadist ("[…] I would have liked to have seen something about how we have Mr. Guevara to thank for introducing Soviet-style prisons to Cuba" 174) and as a "foreigner" (173). She thus regrets not finding any "new information" in the manuscript: "I was quite interested,

she continued after a time, because any new information on Che Guevara's life is, of course, of immediate interest" (172).

By setting Castañeda as the baseline for the negative sort of information Caraballo expects to see in order to find a Guevara-related document credible, the episode serves as a reference to the tendentious writing of veteran anti-Guevara "Great Man"-style Cuban exile historian Humberto Fontova: "[I]t was difficult for me to read about that man as a lover; it was difficult to see his photograph" (174). Fontova was raised in a Cuban exile family in New Orleans and received an undergraduate degree in Political Science from the University of New Orleans and a Master's degree in Latin American Studies at Tulane University. He contributes articles to conservative online publications such as NewsMax, and to print sporting and outdoors magazines such as *Louisiana Sportsman* and *Bowhunter.* He is best known for his books condemning the Cuban Revolution, *Fidel: Hollywood's Favorite Tyrant* (2005) and *Exposing the Real Che Guevara and the Useful Idiots Who Idolize Him* (2007).

Fontova refers to Castañeda as "[Che´s] hagiographer" (54, 94), "*Newsweek* writer, academic, and former Mexican Communist Party member" (125). He fixates on legitimate questions of Guevara historiography like the treatment of prisoners and prosecution of executions in Cuba (referenced in *LC,* 81) only to embroider wild tales of demonic, unmanly sadism based on tenuous sources. Details include Guevara "ordering a section of wall torn out from his office so he could watch his beloved firing squads at work," keeping a dog "whose specialty was happily bounding up after the firing-squad volley and lapping up the blood that oozed from the shattered heads and bodies of the

murdered" (73), and introducing "the humanistic Cuban revolution´s long-practiced vampirism," in the form of selling executed victims' blood plasma (78). The author documents his claim that Guevara had participated in blood trafficking by citing a 2003 lawsuit filed against the Cuban government in the Miami-Dade circuit court: Anderson v. Republic of Cuba, No. 01-28628. Fontova uses such information to indict Che as the ultimate enemy of the Cuban family, portrayed in the patriarchal light of women and children mourning the loss of "their formerly imprisoned menfolk" (109). This amplifies the virile, pious heroism of the Bay of Pigs veterans in Fontova's "Great Men" historical narrative:

> Barely seventeen at the time, José Castaño got word of the recruitment for what came to be known as the Bay of Pigs invasion and promptly volunteered as a paratrooper. His father's murder was very fresh in his mind at the time. Young José yearned to see Che and his toadies up against *armed* men, for once […]. (131)

The Cuban-exile CIA officers who helped capture Guevara in Bolivia in 1967, Félix Rodríguez and Mario Riverón, in contrast to the putatively bloodthirsty revolutionary, during his brief captivity and execution. First, Fontova describes a satisfying role reversal of power:

> "Finally I was face to face with the assassin of thousands of my brave countrymen," recalls Felix Rodriguez. "I walked into the little schoolroom and he was tied up lying on the ground. My boots were next to his face—just like Che's boots had been next to my friend Nestor

> Pino's face after he was captured at the Bay of Pigs. Che had looked at Nestor with that cold sneer of his and simply said, 'We're going to shoot every last one of you.' Now the roles were reversed, and I was standing over Guevara." (197)

Fontova's account blames the Bolivian soldiers and government for Guevara having been killed by Far from desiring Che's execution, according to Fontova's account, the CIA agents and the CIA "wanted him alive and made strenuous efforts to keep him that way" but were finally overruled by the Bolivians (197).

Taibo, finally, appears as the most influential source for Teresa's enamored portrayal of Guevara. Further, the format of Taibo's biography –interspersing humanizing photographs of Guevara and periodically presenting a digressive essay on a photograph's visual information—is imitated in Teresa's text. What's more, the visual information of the photographs from Taibo, and sometimes the exact same photograph appear in Teresa's text. One example is the photographic image of Guevara standing with his left arm in a cast and a boyish smile on his face (Menéndez, *Loving Che* 55, Taibo 269). The photograph appears as Guevara makes his first appearance in the novel. In Taibo, it appears at the beginning of Chapter 21, "La campaña relámpago," which establishes the derring-do and decisive success of the real Guevara's "lightning campaign" from Las Villas to Santa Clara, where the guerrilla forces were able to divide the island in two parts and demoralize the Batista military dictatorship to the point where Batista fled the country. Another example is the picture of Guevara peeking around a corner, which appears at the very end of Teresa's text, below a final, closing quotation of

"La carta en el camino": "Farewell but you will be with me" (156). In Taibo, this picture appears at the head of Chapter 40, "Un fantasma dotado del don de la ubicuidad" (526). The two-page chapter provides a brief essay on the proliferation of rumors about Guevara's fate following his 1965 departure for Congo and disappearance from the public eye (526-27). Taibo ruminates on Guevara as the focal point for diverse narratives and fictions. Taibo's point is that he is a figure that provokes strong emotional reactions, interpreted according to the observer's desire. As the narrator of *Loving Che* learns, the version of Guevara is Teresa's text is pure fantasy.

A recurring method in Menéndez's fiction is to counterpose the "Great Man" history of such figures with plural histories of unexceptional characters caught up in quotidian struggles for material survival and mental equanimity. *Loving Che* provides signposts for research on Ernesto Guevara, but, after all, it is mainly about two women: the novel's unnamed narrator in Miami-Dade, and her mother in Havana, whom she never locates. The mother's and daughter's private lives and the daughter's desired reunion with her mother are engulfed in the economies of desire surrounding special period Cuba, Guevara, family, and Cuban commodified nostalgia in general. Teresa, a painter accustomed to working on commission (63) and leading a comfortable lifestyle in Havana's well-to-do El Vedado neighborhood –on account of her father's inherited wealth as landed aristocracy, with business connections in Spain (17, 38)—suffers a mental breakdown after her husband Carlos is arrested by security forces following the Bay of Pigs invasion (211). She sends her newborn daughter, putatively the narrator, into exile with her father –the narrator's grandfather—and falls out of contact for over thirty

years, leaving behind only two sets of documents upon passing away in Havana anonymously, a likely suicide (215), toward the end of the 1990s. The second set of documents is the bundle she sends the narrator. The first set is the "dozens of portraits" of Guevara that she first painted in oils and then, due to material shortages beginning in the 1970s, sketched in charcoal (210-11). Following Teresa's death, the paintings become the primary source of currency for her former domestic servant Matilde to adapt to Cuba's U.S. dollar-based economy, the result of the 1993 capitalist reforms enacted by Cuban policy makers during the Special Period. As Hernández-Reguant points out, the system of double currency created wealth for "mostly those in key positions at state-owned enterprises or plugged into transnational economic networks" but exacerbated the poverty and disenfranchisement of the Cuban underclass, "particularly […] the elderly" (*Cuba* 5). Whitfield details a variety of strategies innovated during the late 1990s to attract tourist revenue (1-32), including the sale of iconic images of Cuba's socialist leaders as marketable relics (29). Matilde explains to the narrator:

> Without dollars in this country there is nothing. You want to see my ration book? It's worthless. [….] A few months ago, she said, my daughter began to take the paintings of El Che down to the plaza, where the booksellers gather. She sold the first one to a German man for fifty dollars. [….] And she said the man didn't even hesitate, just picked out the money from his wallet as if he'd been paying for a piece of candy. So the next time, my daughter went down with a painting and asked for one

> hundred dollars. This too sold. She sells them now for two hundred, and the tourists buy them. (216-17)

The narrator is left with the experience of having developed numerous contacts but, at the same time, she is acutely aware of her solitary, outsider status as a tourist carrying dollars and "the desperation that poisons every interaction" (204). Her skeptical outlook is evident from the beginning of her trip, as she observes the contrast between the groups of people in line for the airplane departure to Havana at the Miami airport. A Cuban family returning to Havana from a visit with Miami relatives, described as "dour" but "dressed in very new and very bright clothing" (177), is contrasted to the self-conscious narrator –"I explained that I didn't plan to spend very much, that I wasn't a tourist and that I was only trying to find my mother" (176)—and a group of tourists who were eager to absorb the "fabulous" authenticity of Havana, discussing "all the fabulous places they would see, the fabulous architecture and the fabulous people" as well as "the ingredients of a *mojito*" (177). Nevertheless, her culminating act in Havana, having met the woman who was likely closest to the production of the packet of letters from "Teresa," is to effectively purchase a charcoal reproduction of the iconic Korda photograph of Guevara. It is an awkward transaction of which both parties seem to be ashamed, breaking eye contact as the money exchanges hands: "As I left, I pressed some money into her hands. She closed her eyes and lowered her head" (218).

3.9 Martí, Intertextuality, and Monumentality in *Loving Che*

Although *Loving Che* is written in English and presents a deceptively simple structure and style, it develops a dense web of intertextual references to the body of canonical Cuban literature. Each of the three sections of *Loving Che* is, first, punctuated with a reference to Martí in light of post-Soviet Cuban and Cuban exile imaginaries. The narrator encounters three different aspects of the Martí archive –poetic image, nationalistic historiographic interpretation, and monument—over the three parts making up her investigation and the novel's overall structure.

First, the narrator makes several trips to Havana during the early 1990s, "walking my grandfather's old neighborhood—knocking on doors, waving to women in their balconies, reciting to anyone who might listen the name of my mother" (10). Having "met many people and passed out my address to anyone I thought might have known my parents" (10), the narrator receives, toward the end of the decade, a packet of letters from a Havana artist claiming to be her mother by "Che" Ernesto Guevara. The artist, named Teresa, recounts her life story as a romance narrative leading up to the alleged affair with Guevara and the narrator's birth. Teresa's text is pervaded by mentions of tending miniature white roses (39, 59, 79, 144), setting up an extended allusion to the thirty-ninth verse of Martí's *Versos sencillos* (1891), "Cultivo una rosa blanca":

> Cultivo una rosa blanca,
>
> En Julio como en Enero,
>
> Para el amigo sincero
>
> Que me da su mano franca.
>
> Y para el cruel que me arranca

El corazón con que vivo,

Cardo ni oruga cultivo:

Cultivo la rosa blanca.

Martí's poem frames the narrator's "little hope that my mother had sent me a love letter" (160) and, more broadly, the window of dialogue that opened briefly between the United States and Cuba during the mid-to-late-1990s. Within the narrative developed in Teresa's text, the white roses are donated to a children's hospital (39), and said to have been grown from "a small cutting [brought] years before from someplace in North America" (59), and tended by Teresa during the first visit by Guevara's messenger, "a man [who] introduced himself […] as Comrade X" (59), during an incident of spying by state security forces (79). Finally, Teresa describes being struck by the premonition that Guevara will be killed, that she is pregnant with his daughter, and that she must send the daughter away into exile, after she accidentally breaks the plant's stem (144). The alteration from Martí's singular, famous "rosa blanca" –one in a long line of celebrated poems about roses in the singular—to the plural and diminutive –"the *small* bush of *miniature* white roses" (59, my emphasis)—resonates with the novel's overall strategy of diminishing the monumental national figures –beginning with Martí and Guevara—in "Great Man"-style Cuban history and emphasizing the small-scale stories of plural, undistinguished, and indeed either anonymous, incompletely identified, or misidentified characters.

The novel references the nationalistic Cuban exile appropriation of Martí and establishes the narrator's knowledge of his work during the previously-examined scene

with Dr. Caraballo (172-76). It is implied that Caraballo, having mistakenly identified the narrator as a member of her ideologically-dedicated exile cohort (172-73), had most likely considered her research on Martí "impeccable" for its potential usefulness for supporting in-group fundamentalist views (174-75). Dr. Caraballo's previously-mentioned exploitative interest in Teresa's text is reinforced by the sexually-charged advance she makes at the narrator at the end of the visit, caressing the narrator's forehead:

> She walked to me and looked at my face again for a long time and then, to my shock, she reached over and ran her fingers over my forehead. Your forehead protrudes, she said softly. And I, beginning to sweat, thanked her again and, wishing to save her dignity as well as my own, walked out as quickly as I decently could. (175)

The caress suggests a multivalent gesture of objectification. The professor asserts her power, as a professional gatekeeper of knowledge, in the unequal situation. She touches the "protruding forehead," which would be one of the narrator's most prominent inherited physical features from Guevara, hinting at desire of Guevara's history behind her attraction to the narrator's protruding forehead. Finally, the touch suggests a covetous desire for the narrator's brain, a metonym for her intellectual output and capacity for research the professor considers useful, i.e., her interpretation of Martí as a monumental figure legitimizing the U.S. Cuban exile –the site of the authentically Cuban "Great Man"—over socialist Cuba—site of the foreign usurper "New Man," Guevara. What is

important is not so much the larger-than-life historical characters as the ideological beliefs that they are supposed to represent:

> So often in Miami I have departed from a friendly conversation with a lingering chill, as if some malignancy ran beneath the surface. So often, as I did with Dr. Caraballo, I had the sense that the person chatting so pleasantly with me was only waiting to be offended, to detect in some innocent or ignorant statement a secret adherence to repellant beliefs. (175)

Finally, there is a reference to Martí's monumentality in post-Soviet Cuba, framed in the specific context of a young Havana woman alluding to Martí in a way that she thinks will impress the narrator. The narrator meets the young woman during her last, late-1990s investigative trip to Havana, after having received Teresa's letters and having consulted with Dr. Caraballo, as well as other interviewees in Miami-Dade. The episode begins with the narrator allowing a little boy to trick her into buying groceries for his mother and him:

> For a long stretch the little boy walked with me, pointing out houses and telling me fantastical stories about them […]. [….] We came, or he led me, finally to a sprawling open-air market […]. [….] The little boy, whose name I still didn't know, pulled me along until he finally stopped in front of a display of meat and began to order. I played the dupe and we spent the next hour or so shopping […], he devising the menu and I

> supplying the dollars, which along with something called the dollar peso seemed to be the only currency accepted. (185-86)

The child leads the narrator to an apartment, where she meets the young woman, who introduces herself as Judi: "She didn't apologize for the boy's corralling me into buying all that food, but she thanked me so profusely that I took it she and the charming boy had developed a good scam, part of whose successful execution was to pretend that the victim was just a generous visitor arriving for an appointed lunch" (187). While preparing the food and during lunch, Judi talks uninterruptedly to the narrator, complaining about the shortcomings of post-Soviet Cuban socialism –"Forget education and equality in health care, she said, Without dollars in this country you're as good as dead" (187)—and generally performing an insider's account of "the real Cuba" in the mode of a theatrical monologue, complete with a comic impression and dramatic pauses:

> [Y]ou might as well bury yourself under a sidewalk at the Colon cemetery if you don't have family in Miami, if you don't know anybody in the counterrevolutionary Miami mafia –and this last part she said with such a deep, brilliant imitation of Castro, complete with upraised finger, that I laughed. [….] There's no police state here; that would at least be exciting. No, the police can't follow you around— once you got into a car, you'd leave their bicycles in the dust. [….] All these new clubs and stores around here, do you think any Cuban can afford them? She let out an exaggerated sigh. Our entertainment consists of figuring out how to get enough food

> for dinner. She waited a beat before adding, And even this is boring (187-88).

Judi's performance ends on the topic of emigration. She expresses a desire to leave Cuba but distances herself from the most recent mass exodus from the country, the 1994 rafter crisis (188). During August of 1994, nearly 40,000 Cubans had attempted to flee Cuba in improvised watercraft but were intercepted by the U.S. Coast Guard and detained at the U.S. Naval base at Guantánamo Bay. All but five hundred of the detainees were granted permission to enter the United States, together with, eventually, approximately 200,000 more émigrés who availed themselves of the U.S. visa program enacted in May 1995. Coast Guard and Miami-based rescue volunteers' estimates indicate that about one out of three rafts were found without survivors (De Valle and De Vise, 1A). According to De Valle and De Vise, the generation of émigrés from the raft crisis has avoided participating in Miami Cuban exile political organizations and should, rather, be considered an economically-motivated rather than politically-motivated emigration. Judi's portrayal of the crisis, in contrast, is more abstractly focused on the question of nation and national symbolism during the post-Soviet period. She concludes with a joke about Martí's statue in Havana's Parque Central:

> During the last rafter crisis, Judi said, I thought that I alone would be left in Havana. One morning, I passed by the statue of Martí in the park, and you know what they had done to him? Judi laughed. These Cubans, she said. From his outstretched arm, someone had carefully hung a large suitcase. (189)

Taking Judi's discourse at face value, the black humor underlying the alleged prank hinges on the fact that, as per the reformed 1992 Cuban constitution, official cultural policy had shifted from "Marxist-Leninist ideology" to "revolutionary nationalism," an "ideological framework based on Marx and Martí" (Rojas 144). Economic and political conditions had deteriorated so badly, though, that, as the joke goes, even Martí wanted to leave Cuba. However, the narrator conspicuously suspects that "she was giving me a rather cartoon version of what she expected I wanted to hear, perhaps her way of paying me for my attention and generosity" (188), a wary attitude supported by the fact that boy had originally appeared to be targeting Cuban émigrés visiting the island:

> I turned at a corner, and after a few more blocks a little boy fell in step with me and together we walked in silence. Hello, I finally said in English. Hello, he answered back. Are you British? I thought for a moment. Cuban, I said. He stopped dead, feigning great surprise, and I laughed at this hard little actor. (185)

Judi's abstract punchline revolving around the Martí statue holding a suitcase serves the timeworn nationalist Cuban exile version that Martí and, by extension, the authentic Cuban nation are on the side of anti-Castro exile. The vignette confirms, in a way that seems suspiciously well-rehearsed to the narrator (188-89), the sort of thesis about how Martí "had invented the concept of the Cuban exile" that had impressed Dr. Caraballo (172).

With regard to the overall methodology of the novel, as observed elsewhere with the allusion to "Cultivo una rosa blanca," translated in Teresa's text to "carefully

trimming the small bush of miniature roses" (59), the reference to the literal monumentality of Martí in post-Soviet Cuba subordinates the "Great Man" to the anonymous "someone" and undifferentiated, irreverent class of "[t]hese Cubans" responsible for the prank of dressing him up for travel (189). The reference to the prank itself is framed by the narrator's encounter with a woman and child who are practically anonymous: the boy is never named, a fact on which the narrator remarks ("The little boy, whose name I still didn't know […]" 186), and the woman only identifies herself by an Americanized nickname. They are pointedly generic. The boy and young woman are only described as "a little boy," "this hard little actor," "the little boy," "the boy," "a beautiful young woman," "the woman," "the young woman," and "the woman, who had introduced herself as Judi" (185-89). They live in an out-of-the-way "large block of apartment buildings," "at one of the sixth-floor windows," up "a grimy box-way of stairs," in "two rooms set apart by a gas burner" whose only furniture mentioned is a sofa and a "little stove" (186-88).

With regard to Guevara, the history of the Cuban Revolution in the second part of Teresa's story, leading up to the Revolution (38-54) provides several hints at a more pluralistic and less romantic version of Cuban history. "Teresa" implies that her husband may actually have been imprisoned following the Revolution, due to his involvement with the Directorio Estudiantil (40), a reading supported by the woman claiming to have been her long-standing domestic servant (211). She also expresses an infatuation with the student leader José Antonio Echeverría, "so gorgeously lost" (44) when he is killed leading an assault on the presidential palace. Such details in *Loving Che* strongly recall

Carlos Franqui's thesis of the "cropping" or reduction of the historiography of the Cuban revolution to an archetypal, select patriarchal order, which Franqui compares to Christ and twelve apostles:

> Beards were the symbols of the revolution. How many barbudos were there? Perhaps two thousand. But Fidel was fond of biblical parables and always spoke of the Twelve. [….] By magic, the clandestine forces, the 26 July Movement, the strikes, the taking of Cienfuegos, the assault on the National Palace […] José Antonio Echevarría, the guerrilla fronts, sabotage […] all of it disappears. The Directorio […] is presented as an ambitious group attempting to divide the revolution. It is liquidated. (14)

For Franqui, the consolidation of the socialist Cuban state is seen as "a collective exercise in machismo, which is its own ideology" (150), a point of view reinforced in Cabrera Infante's *Vista del amanecer en el trópico* (114). *Vista,* Cabrera Infante's historical novel, presents a panoramic view of Cuban history in terse, ekphrastic vignettes. The vision of history is one of nonstop pointless violence, from pre-Columbian times to an apocalyptic end of days. The *Vista* vignette dealing with the death of the charismatic rebel leader Camilo Cienfuegos in a plane crash echoes Franqui's unromantic view of the cannibalistic concentration of power during the aftermath of the Revolution:

> El Segundo comandante desapareción en el avión que lo traía a la capital de regreso de poner preso al tercer comandante. El comandante en jefe salió a buscarlo en el avión presidencial. Pero el avión hizo un recorrido somero y el comandante en jefe se fue a ver vacas y toros de una finca

> requisada. Por la noche vio televisión y se acostó tarde interesado en las aventuras ruidosas de un cowboy y unos indios. (*Vista* 114).

The passage from *Vista* implies as well the idealization of the country as a cynical *machista* posture by the Cuban elite during the institutionalization of the Revolution, a point that Franqui elaborates:

> Machismo creates its own way of life, one in which everything negative is feminine. [….] Its negative hero is the dictator […] and its positive hero is the rebel. They are at odds in politics, but they both love power. And both despise homosexuality, as if every macho had his hidden gay side. The result was that the macho came to despise art, music, and culture, in general: these are perceived as feminine or […] homosexual. The macho idealizes the country because the city, for him, is the scene of degeneration and homosexuality. (150)

On an extradiagetic level, *Vista del amanecer en el trópico* is signalled to be an intertextual source for *Loving Che,* in an unattributed, interlingual pastiche toward the beginning of Teresa's text. A crazy man on the street recounts the origins of Cuba:

> Before the beginning […] the island was empty and the wind was without voice […]. And then God saw this green jewel, the man says, this perfect island, and he raised a great army of angels and declared himself minister for eternity. (*Loving Che* 26)

The contrived creation myth that opens *Vista* is worded similarly, also announcing the theme of consolidation:

> Las islas surgieron del océano, primero como islotes aislados, luego los cayos se hicieron montañas y las aguas bajas, valles. Más tarde las islas se reunieron para formar una gran isla que pronto se hizo verde donde no era dorada o rojiza. (*Vista* 13)

Another work of Cuban literature related to the Revolution that is referenced in *Loving Che* is Edmundo Desnoes's 1962 existentialist novel, *Memorias del subdesarrollo.* Teresa's story invites comparison to *Memorias* in that she, like the narrator of *Memorias,* is a disaffected, solitary artist from the Cuban upper-middle-class who is obliged to come to terms with life in Havana following the Revolution. Like the narrator of *Memorias,* she is traumatized by burning of the El Encanto department store (*Loving Che* 145). The male gaze of the narrator of *Memorias,* who momentarily gets in trouble with the revolutionary authorities for engaging in a forbidden love affair with a young woman, is replaced by the female gaze of "Teresa," who of course becomes the lover of Che Guevara directly, according to the narrative. The same year that *Loving Che* was released, Desnoes published an introductory essay in the Al Schaller's translation of *Memories of Underdevelopment.* The theme of the essay was the open-endedness of the novel, which for Desnoes was the expression of "a critical conscience in the midst of a radical revolution" (Introduction 9). In architectural terms similar to Franqui's contrast between the Habana Libre and Hotel Nacional (100), carrying similar connotations of gender and nation, Desnoes sums up *Memorias* as a skeptical digging below ground around the revolution than an attempt to build up a tenuous, cohesive monument to the Revolution:

> *Memories* did not build a castle in the sand but instead it scooped out a well, opened a small hole in the seashore to retain and analyze the residue of the powerful tide, the burial ground of the waves. Today, it seems to me, holes are more important than dizzying heights; our critical conscience, our doubts are much more necessary and productive than sublime heights. (Introduction 9-10).

Perhaps it is in a similar sense that *Loving Che* presents two distinctly cited last names for the woman who purportedly had sent the framing narrator a romance fiction of the Cuban Revolution, claiming to be the narrator's mother: De la Landre ("Gland"), as well as De la Cueva ("Cave").

Finally, the structural importance of a Neruda poem in *Loving Che*, provides reference to the literary history surrounding Neruda's contentious relations with the leadership of the Cuban Revolution, which Neruda found, like Franqui, to be too dependent on a vertical mythology of its "great men." Feinstein reports that "when Neruda […] heard of Che's assassination, in 1967, instead of expressing condolences, he told his rather shocked informer, Sergio Insunza: 'The people we should be admiring are the Recabarrens and not these young dreamers who go around committing crazy acts'" (Feinstein 326). The problems between the leadership of the Cuban Revolution and Neruda date back to the poet's admonitory poem "A Fidel Castro," the theme of which was the plurality of revolutionary history. According to Feinstein:

> In the poem, Neruda invites Fidel to share a bottle of Chilean wine with him and, as he drinks, to realize

…that your victory

Is like the old wine of my homeland:

It is not one man who makes it but many men

And not one grape but many plants

And it is not one drop but many rivers:

Not one captain but many battles… (347)

In *Loving Che,* the Neruda poem "La carta en el camino" is transformed from the first to the third sections of the novel in a similar tendency toward plurality. In the first section, the poem is introduced as an echo of the narrator's mother. In Teresa's romance narrative of the Revolution, it is made out to be the farewell message of the relatively dashing Guevara as male love interest, causing "Teresa" to exclaim in overwrought anguish to the "great man" and supposed father of her daughter, the reason for her existence:

> Oh my Captain, my sweet Ernesto. And where the bed of flowers? Where the red banners? Gone away into silence, never to taste excellent morning again. (125)

It is a travesty of Neruda's political sentiment as expressed in "A Fidel Castro" in which what is called for is "not one captain but many battles" (125). In the final section of *Loving Che,* titled precisely "Letter on the Road," the eponymous Neruda poem is claimed by the narrator for her own open-ended narrative, in which she writes beyond the romance of "Teresa" at the same time she finds that she is neither able to penetrate the

economies of desire surrounding commodified Cuban nostalgia nor escape it in the environment of globalization.

3.10 Conclusions

Loving Che is a provocative work by a young U.S. Cuban writer. As evidenced by the backlash against her work from vociferous elements of the Miami Cuban exile community, the choice to deal with even a two-dimensional, artificial version of Guevara was a risky one. The novel explores one woman's attempt to navigate historical legacies of the Cuban Revolution on and off the island, in order to find her mother in Havana. The connection with her mother is interposed by the patriarchal authority of her exile grandfather and, after his death, by the apocryphal documentary fantasy of Che Guevara and the Cuban revolution written according to tropes of harlequin romance. Archival dissonances give the lie to Teresa's text, beginning with the clash between the assiduous revolutionary activity and proletarian internationalist ideological theory and praxis of the historical Guevara and the two-dimensional, disposable format of commercial romance fiction. Dissonances within the biographical scholarship on Guevara and Caraballo's archiving, and subsequent "deaccession," of the narrator stage the vampirish quality of anti-Castro exile history. At the level of language, the narrator is left with the sense that, after attempts at communication with the people she believes may help her find her mother, most of her conversations in Miami, Havana, and Paris are structured by the limits of the *idioma* of patriarchal group identification and the logic of marketing or

jineterismo (legally unauthorized forms of commercial solicitation). The novel presents a bicultural strategy of intertextual play that relates to the theme of the Revolution staged as romance. The explicit citation of the major 1997 Guevara biographies in the afterword invites a reading organized around the fictional account of the famous revolutionary. Considering the novel, however, as part of a broader body of Cuban fiction and Latin American literature surrounding the revolution, suggests the counterpoint presented in *Loving Che* between artifacts of nostalgia as commodities for profit (bestselling biographies, romance fiction) and work that invites skepticism toward history as commodified nostalgia as well as toward ethnic or national identification.

Chapter Four: Staging Enriqueta Faber as Post-Exile, Trans-Atlantic, Trans-Caribbean Memoirist in *Mujer en traje de batalla* by Antonio Benítez Rojo

> Caminamos hacia el muelle a la luz de un farol que llevaba un esclavo. Pensé que atrás dejaba a mi *Mujer en traje de batalla.* ¿Adónde habría ido a parar? Pero sobre todo, atrás y para siempre dejaba a Maryse, y con ella su cariño, siempre sin peros ni condiciones. [....] Al fondo de la penumbra estaba la goleta *Collector* [...]. Me llevaría a un nuevo tiempo cuyo calendario empezaba con días de ceniza. (Benítez Rojo, *Mujer* 507)

This chapter examines Antonio Benítez Rojo's *Mujer en traje de batalla* (2001) in light of the novel's counterpoint between, first, the fictional framing of Enriqueta Faber, a tangential figure of early nineteenth-century Cuban history; second, the documentation of Faber in Cuban and Cuban exile historiography; and, finally, the archival sources cited and implied in the novel's "enorme panorama histórico de las guerras napoleónicas y sus secuelas en el Caribe, sobre todo Cuba" (González Echevarría, Rev. 17). The historical Faber was born in Lausanne, Switzerland in 1791. At the age of fifteen, she married an officer in Napoleon Bonaparte's army named Jean-Baptiste Renaud and was widowed during Bonaparte's conquest of Northern Europe. She disguised herself as a man to study medicine in Paris and rejoined Bonaparte's army as a surgeon, under an assumed masculine identity, during Bonaparte's failed 1812 Russian campaign. After that defeat,

she was transferred to Spain, where she taken prisoner by Wellingon's troops in Miranda de Ebro. At the end of the Napoleonic Wars, she migrated to the Caribbean using the name of Enrique Faber. She practiced medicine in Guadeloupe before migrating to Baracoa, Cuba, where she held a bureaucratic position at the head of the municipal board of medicine (Protomedicato). In 1819, "Enrique Faber" married a Baracoa resident named Juana de León. After four years of marriage, León publically exposed Faber's identity as a woman disguised as a man. León filed a legal complaint of fraud in 1823, which resulted in the annulment of the union and the criminal conviction and religious censure of Faber in Santiago de Cuba. She was confined in the Hospital de Paula in Havana and then deported to New Orleans. Nothing is definitively known about her life after she was expelled from Cuba. (*Mujer* 509, Bacardí y Moreau 218-19).

In this chapter, I explore the novel as a critique of the nationalistic portrayal of Faber during two periods of Cuban exile historiography. The first time frame occurs between two major Cuban wars of independence, the Ten Years' War (1868-1878) and the war of 1895-1898. The principal target of criticism in this frame is the work of New York-based émigré historian Francisco Calcagno, who included a deprecatory entry on Faber in his *Diccionario biográfico cubano* (1878) and wrote a satirical novel, *Un casamiento misterioso* (1894), based on reports about her criminal trial. She is portrayed as a national scapegoat in Calcagno's work.

The second time frame is 1971-1990. Those are the dates of publication of *Cuba: economía y sociedad* by the influential exile historian Leví Marrero (1911-1995). *Cuba*

constitutes a fourteen-volume encyclopedic history that chronicles the development of various sectors of Cuban agricultural production, from the fifteenth century until the middle of the eighteenth century, relating economic transformation to social changes. Special attention is given to tracking the formation of a national creole consciousness (Marrero 7: vi-x). Faber appears as a footnote in the final volume of Marrero's work: the sixth tome dedicated to the subject of "Sugar, Enlightenment, and [National] Consciousness." The article about her, titled "La cirujana suiza que, para ejercer como tal, debió hacer creer que era hombre" (14: 53), is inset, in a text box, within a chapter on eighteenth-century reforms of the medical profession in Cuba (14: 49-88). She is portrayed in a positive, albeit anomalous light, as an archetypal proto-Cuban exile who is redeemed by history from a conservative Catholic point of view. At the same time, the version of her story as it is summarized by Marrero reinforces a liberal Cuban national teleology.

I make a case that, in developing a critique of Faber's construction as a Cuban exile figure (in a negative sense in Calcagno, and positively in Marrero), the novel performs a revision of Benítez Rojo's own theory of the Caribbean presented in the much-noted essay *La isla que se repite: El Caribe y la perspective posmoderna* (1989). To be more precise, postmodernist elements of Benítez Rojo's theory that appear to be asserted as ontological categories of Caribbean culture (i.e., performance and supersyncretism) in the chapter "Fernando Ortiz: el Caribe y la posmodernidad" (*La isla* 149-78) are recategorized in a European context in *Mujer en traje de batalla.* At the

same time, the novel reinforces the idea of trans-Caribbean, trans-Atlantic societal, economic, and historical flows that transcends geographical boundaries, based on the more concrete arguments put forward in the chapter "De la plantación a la Plantación" (*La isla* 1-50). Finally, I explore the framing narrative of Faber as an octogenarian working on her memoir in Manhattan in 1870. The fictional Henriette's memoir writing provides the fundamental premise of *Mujer en traje de batalla.* It stages the production of an authoritative document that corrects Calcagno's and Marrero's versions. Calcagno's sources are the often sensationalist, reconstructed versions of the case that were produced by writers like Laureano Fernández de Cuevas and circulated in Cuba throughout the nineteenth century (Camayd-Freixas 23-27). Marrero's cited sources are Emilio Bacardí y Moreau's *Crónicas de Santiago de Cuba* (1909) and Emilio Roig de Leuchsenring's "La primera mujer médico en Cuba, en 1819" (1965). Both sets of documentation are ultimately based on the testimony given by the historical Faber during the 1823 trial. I will examine this narrative framing with regard to the fictional Faber's last, abstract meditations on archival processes.

As seen in the first two chapters of this dissertation, Fernández and Menéndez create characters that attempt to research or write Cuban history from the United States – e.g., Manuel de Zequeira and Eloy de los Reyes in *La vida es un special*, and Dr. Caraballo in *Loving Che*— to assert teleological versions of Cuban history that are subverted by the archival "noise" of the overall novels. In contrast, the fictional character of Henriette Faber as post-exile memoirist stages the liberation of her own sentimental,

intellectual, and adventure history from the municipal, provincial, national, and virtual archives of nationalistic Cuban exile historiography.

4.1 Antonio Benítez Rojo: Statistics and Literature, 1958-2005

Antonio Benítez Rojo (1931-2005) emigrated from Cuba to Massachusetts in 1980, when he was nearly fifty years old and had already had two careers within the Revolution, the first as the director of statistics and head of the Bureau of Economic Planning in the Cuban Ministry of Labor, and the second as a writer of narrative fiction (Benítez Rojo, "Antonio" 99). He described having become politically motivated as a student at the University of Havana during the 1950s to pursue applied mathematics and statistics, wishing to contribute to the work of decolonization:

> Me interesaban mucho la planificación económica y la econometría, es decir, la aplicación de las matemáticas y la estadística a los planes económicos. [….] El mundo atravesaba por el período de descolonización que siguió a la Segunda Guerra Mundial y se trataba de acelerar el desarrollo económico de los nuevos países. Mi sueño era contribuir en la medida de mis posibilidades a esta gigantesca tarea. ("Entrevista" 125)

For this reason, he solicited and was granted a United Nations scholarship to study "matemáticas avanzadas y planificación" ("Entrevisto por Encuentro" 12). By the

beginning of his professional writing career in 1967, he held "degrees in economics, finance, and accounting from the University of Havana in 1955 and the American University in Washington" and had "worked in succession as a statistician for the Cuban Ministry of Labor, the Cuban Telephone Company, and the Council of Urban Development" for a decade ("Benítez Rojo" 65).

While recovering from an accident in 1964, "in which I fractured two vertebrae and had to stay in bed for three months," he studied twentieth-century Latin American authors "[Jorge Luis] Borges, [Alejo] Carpentier, and [Juan] Rulfo [...] intensively" and began work on his first short story collection, *Tute de Reyes* (1967), which would win the Casa de las Américas prize for literature (Benítez Rojo, "Antonio" 99). He interpreted his career change from statistics and economic planning and to literature as a matter of chance:

> […] I had finished a book of fantastic tales. I gave it the title of *Tute de reyes* and sent it to the Casa de las Américas contest. When I sent the manuscript, I made the following promise to myself: "If I am a finalist, I will change professions and continue writing; in the opposite case, I will forget literature and continue my work in numbers and statistics." For good or for ill, the book won first prize. (Benítez Rojo, "Antonio" 99-100)

At the same time that he produced narrative fiction in Cuba, mostly dominated by such "thematic obsessions" as "[…] alienation, […] confined spaces, the denial of identity, [and] duality" ("Benítez Rojo" 66), he worked for the socialist Cuban

government's Latin American Center for Literary Research, the Department of Theater and Dance of the Council of Culture, the publishing department at the revolutionary imprint Casa de las Américas, and the Center for Caribbean Studies. His second book of short stories, *El escudo de hojas secas*, won the 1968 Union of Cuban Writers and Artists Literary Award, and, outside of Cuba, his work was singled out in Seymour Menton's *Prose Fiction of the Cuban Revolution* (1975) as "probably the best […] produced by the Revolution" (185).

During the 1970s, when "the Central Committee of the Communist Party and the Dirección Política de las Fuerzas Armadas, a special army office, were in charge of Cuban culture" (Benítez Rojo, "Carnival of Hyphens" 25), Carlos Victoria writes that "Benítez Rojo representaba una tercera opción entre la sumisión y la disidencia: una literatura hecha con dignidad, con astucia, que sorteaba los riesgos a base de elegancia, agudeza y talento" (20). According to Victoria, Benítez Rojo's works published during Cuba's "década […] *gris*" (20) –including the short story collections *Heroica* (1976) and *La tierra y el cielo* (1978), the novella *Los inquilinos* (1976), and the novel *El mar de las lentejas* (1979)—are of lasting literary value at the same time that they satisfied the disjunctive revolutionary criterion for artistic production "Dentro de la revolución todo; fuera de la revolución, nada" (20-21).

In a 2001 interview, Benítez Rojo cited "desilusión […] gradual" with the Revolution caused by, first, the Cuban government's disregard for "estadísticas de población, productividad, empleo, salario, costo de la vida, accidentes de trabajo […]

dentro del modelo soviético" ("Entrevisto" 12-13), second, the conclusion that "en 1968, [fue] demonstrado ya que la aspiración de Castro era […] continuar una política estalinista" (13), and, third, for having had his own work blacklisted between 1969 and 1976 (13). He identified 1968 as the year when he and his wife Hilda had decided to leave the island with their four-year-old daughter and newborn son (13), although he explained that this course of action was precipitated by the illness of their daughter, which was determined to be untreatable in Cuba. His wife and children were allowed to relocate to Boston, Massachusetts, "ya que allí estaba el hospital especializado que atendía casos como los de mi hija" (Benítez Rojo, "Entrevista" 126), but he was denied permission to travel for the next twelve years. In 1980, he defected from Cuba during a trip made in his capacity as head of publishing at Casa de las Américas and rejoined his family in Massachusetts ("Entrevista" 126, "Entrevisto" 13).

His stated reasons, timing, and manner of leaving Cuba to live in the United States were specific to his family and work situation and distinct from the broader cohort of Cuba-U.S. emigration in 1980. The migration of that year was dominated by the approximately 125,000 émigrés who arrived during the Mariel Boat Lift between April 1 and September 25, including the writers Reinaldo Arenas, Guillermo Rosales, René Cifuentes, Jesús Selgas, and Carlos Victoria (Pedraza, *Political Disaffection* 89-99). At least two interviewers seem to have been curious about the procedural difference of Benítez Rojo's migration, and, reinforcing the prevalence of generational models within which U.S. Cuban émigré writers are categorized, they asked him to address his

experience as a first-generation "Cuban exile" ("Entrevista" 135, "Entrevisto por *Encuentro*" 15). For example, Reina Roffé asked whether Benítez Rojo shared Reinaldo Arena's depression, "feeling like a ghost of himself," for living away from Cuba –"Usted se va de Cuba más o menos en la misma época que Reinaldo Arenas. [….] En el exilio, Arenas se siente como un fantasma de sí mismo. ¿Cómo ha sido esta experiencia para usted?" ("Entrevista" 135-36). The unidentified interviewer for *Encuentro de la cultura cubana* inquired about his migrations and displacement between Panama –where he was born and where his mother's family lived—Cuba, and the United States (e.g., "¿Por qué saliste de Cuba [para estudiar]? [….] ¿Por qué regresaste [para trabajar]? [….] ¿Cuándo y por qué te desilusionaste del castrismo? [….]" (12-13), the vicissitudes of "exile" ("¿Qué te dio y qué te quitó el exilio?" 15), and asked him to speculate on whether, "at last," there will be a future for Cuba ("¿Habrá, por fin, un destino para Cuba?" 15).

His responses in both interviews were pragmatic, concrete, and centered on his current social relationships and work rather than on national or ethnic politics or the past. He phrased them in a way that contradicted the expectation for first-generation "exile" writers to reinforce a "relentlessly retrospective" perspective fixated on such themes as alienation and desire for return (Pérez Firmat, *Transcending* 3-4). The substance of his answers is that he preferred to live in Massachusetts with his family, travel, write, and teach literature at Amherst College ("Entrevista" 136, "Entrevisto" 12).

He responded with particular emphasis on material conditions to the questions posed during the *Encuentro* interview, subverting the trope of Cuban exile

"homelessness" and nostalgia by positing exile as a return to a "true home" ("un verdadero hogar"), which he defines as "Hilda y […] mis hijos":

> El exilio me ha dado una genuina amplitud material y espiritual. Digo "genuina" porque hay un tip de amplitud imaginaria, digamos la amplitud intelectual de Lezama, que es genial pero libresca. He podido viajar por muchos países […]. Dar clases y conferencias no es para mí un trabajo; es un placer como pocos. [….] Pero sobre todo, ya en el plano familiar, el exilio me devolvió a Hilda y a mis hijos; me dio un verdadero hogar. (12)

With regard to the question of Cuba's future, he noted that tourism had superseded sugar in the Cuban economy and that he feared the replacement of the "plantation economy" of sugar with "plantations of hotels," ending a list of examples of "truly horrible" service economies with that of Miami Beach (15). This represents a statistician mentality, focused on concerns of accounting, instead of a heavily nostalgic, idealized one.

4.2 Benítez Rojo's Caribbean Trilogy, 1979-2000

Benítez Rojo referred to the work that bridges his careers in socialist Cuba and in the United States –the historical novel *El mar de las lentejas* (1979), the book-length essay of cultural theory and literary criticism *La isla que se repite* (1989), and the collection of historical short stories *A View from the Mangrove* (1998)/*Paso de los*

vientos (2000)—as a "Caribbean trilogy" ("Entrevista" 129-31). By researching and writing about the "fragmentaciones, polifonía, postergamientos y deplazamientos" (Cuervo Hewitt 461) that, for Benítez Rojo, characterize the densely superimposed historicities of the Caribbean as a transnational, sociocultural space –"un mar histórico-económico principal, y además, un meta-archipiélago cultural sin centro" (*La isla* xiii), his work began to focus on historiography and historical fiction ("Las crónicas" 335-36).

El mar de las lentejas narrates the emergence of the modern Caribbean over the course of the sixteenth century –from the time of Christopher Columbus's second voyage to the Americas (1494-1495) to the death of Philip II in 1598—as a result of burgeoning transnational and decentralized capitalistic trade, an amorphous, epistemological as well as economic, sea change uncontrollable by the Spanish empire. The novel interweaves narrative threads related to four documentary groups: the second voyage of Columbus (1493-1496), the military campaign by Pedro Menéndez de Avilés against the French Huguenots in North Florida (1561), and the contraband smuggling and privateer expeditions of John Hawkins (1562-1588), culminating in the defeat of the Spanish Armada by the British Navy in 1588. The method followed in preparing *El mar*, according to an article by Benítez Rojo that is part essay and part short story, titled "Las crónicas y el autor de hoy," encompassed archival research, the introduction of probability as a structural and thematic principle, and the fictional elaboration of documentary material.

As “Las crónicas” portrays the process of research, Benítez Rojo began with an undefined project, which he claimed was at first unrelated to the idea of producing a novel; rather, it was meant to investigate his “Caribbean roots” through the documentation to which he had access in the archives and library collections in Havana:

> Mi inocencia, en lo que respecta al debate actual sobre la historia y la novela, era casi virginal, y mi equipaje teórico, limitado por el aislamiento, era escaso y obsoleto. Estas limitaciones [...] importaban poco: las crónicas y las historias de Indias estaban ahí, a la mano [...]. [....] [L]a idea de escribir una novela histórica no irrumpió de repente por sí sola, sino que fue articulándose poco a poco; primero sólo fue una curiosidad de lector, y en esa etapa completé la lectura de las crónicas e historias de Indias más conocidas, así como las interpretaciones históricas, económicas y sociales más al uso sobre la época del Desubrimiento y la Conquista (“Las crónicas” 335-36)

In this version, Benítez Rojo became interested in the unreliability of the documentation to serve as “a stable and prestigious center with which to connect [...] Caribbean origins,” in light of the chronicles’ rhetorical content and in light of the dispersed nature of the archives or fragmentary sites of reception, in the case of, for example, the Fugger newsletters, to which the documentary sources originally remitted (336). As a result, according to “Las crónicas,” the research shifted from an ontological project (a search for the Caribbean “certificate of baptism” in imperial European

archives) to the composition of a novel about the anti-teleological "accidents" of history and the mistakes in primary source documents related to the Caribbean, intended and unintended, which challenge ontological versions of Caribbean political history and geography based on colonial or neocolonial archival materials:

> [P]rimero que nada tenía que renunciar a la idea de buscar mis raices caribeñas en algún texto: mi partida de bautismo simplemente no existía. Ni siquiera los papeles de identidad del mar Caribe estaban en regla. Primero, había sido una porción totalmente indiferenciada del mar del Norte, nombre que en la época se le daba al Atlántico, y más tarder, en el siglo XVI, al momento de diferenciarse, resultaba que un cartógrafo y marino hugonote, Guillaume le Testu, le había llamado por error *Le Mer de Lentille,* confundiendo en francés Antillas por lentejas. (339-40).

He describes, from an anachronistic point of view, having applied chaos theory to the formulation of Caribbean sociocultural and literary theory in *La isla que se repite,* the random method by which he selected the documentary clusters and plot threads of *El mar*:

> Ya había experimentado con el azar, en tanto técnica literaria […]. De manera que siguiendo un tipo de muestreo aleatorio, un tanto semejante al sistema adivinatorio yoruba, llegué, de manera muy suelta, a localizar lo que Barthes llamaría cuatro campos referenciales, constituidos por el segundo viaje de Colón, el reinado de Felipe II, la conquista de la Florida

> por Menéndez de Avilés, y la interesante sociedad de la familia Ponte, de Tenerife, y Hawkins, de Plymouth, que en la época mercantilista del capitilismo había fundado la primera empresa internacional de viajes triangulares negreros de que se tenga noticia. (336)

Having thus selected the documentary sources for *El mar* as a novel of errors on sixteenth-century Caribbean history, according to "Las crónicas," the nonfictional characters and archival information were demonumentalized and humanized in the fictional form of the narrative:

> [D]evestí las crónicas de su falsa epicidad y las releí sacando a flote su sentido humano, donde las grandezas se mezclan con las bajezas, el miedo con el valor, la bondad con la crueldad. [....] De este modo construí a un Felipe II cuya secreta ambición era ser santo, y a un Menéndez de Avilés que se dolía de haber perdido en América el código caballeresco del honor. En tanto caribeño, reconocí un abuelo probable en un pobre soldado aragonés, temeroso, cazurro y analfabeto, que desembarcara en La Española en el segundo viaje de Colón. La sociedad Ponte-Hawkins, capitalista y negrera, era una suerte de chancro donde se detenían algunos hilos de mis orígenes. Intenté ofrecer este cuadro de la manera más objectiva posible, sin héroes ni anti-héroes [...]. ("Las crónicas" 340)

Benítez Rojo's "chronicle" of how he composed his first historical novel, based on the reading of archival *crónicas* that he accuses of incompleteness and unreliability

("no eran más que noticias fragmentadas, ensartadas por embustes, enhebradas por el cálculo y las pasiones," 338), ends on the auto-reflexive note that the author, like a character out of a Borges story, was filled with "rage and astonishment" upon reading the finished version of his own novel. He found his work to be equally manipulative, disingenuously self-serving, and distortional of historical facts as the archival materials that he had putatively attempted to portray more "objectively" (33-34).

The conclusion of the essay posits the historical chronicle –"un texto imposible de legitimación y fundación"—and fiction –in which "ambiciones […] astucias […] temores […] y […] deseos" are inscribed, in the manner of a chronicle—as mirror-like doubles of one another (34). As "an impossible text of legitimation and foundation," the article develops, retroactively, a rhetoric of discovery, through original observation and performance, in which the chance archival experiment in *El mar de las lentejas* leads to the application of chaos theory in the second book in the "Caribbean trilogy," *La isla que se repite.*

La isla is a book-length essay on socioeconomic history and cultural production in the Caribbean. It represents the synthesis of Benítez Rojo's interests and experience in advanced mathematics, postcolonial politics, and historical and literary research. The essay begins with the concrete view of the Caribbean as an archipelago. Benítez Rojo defines the physical geography of the Caribbean by the fluidity of oceanic borders and currents and as an "assymetrical" configuration of islands between Latin America and North America ("un puente de islas que conecta de 'cierta manera,' es decir, de una

manera asimétrica, Suramérica con Norteamérica") that (*La isla* ii-v). The critical apparatus of *La isla*, presented in appendices to the essay (305-12), justifies the application of chaos mathematics to his study of Caribbean cultural performance and literature by first relating two of the field's pioneering works of research to the defining characteristics of fluid dynamics and the irregular contours of coastlines.

Benítez Rojo identifies physicist David Ruelle's discovery of "strange attractors," in the study of turbulence in liquids, as the origin of the scientific and mathematic theories of chaos:

> Ruelle [...] llamó "atractores extraños" (*strange attractors*) a las regularidades dinámicas escondidas dentro del desorden. Muy pronto un número sustancial de científicos buscaba atractores extraños en los fenómenos más comunes de la vida cotidiana. Había nacido Caos. (*La isla* 306).

He relates mathematician Benoit Mandelbrot's development of fractal geometry to the measurement of such natural phenomena as "the uneven coastal perimeter of the British island[s]":

> Mandelbrot partió de que en la naturaleza no se producen abstracciones como el triángulo e, incluso, como la línea recta. La pregunta de cuánto mide la línea costera de Inglaterra, por ejemplo, no tiene una sola respuesta sinon infinitas. Vista desde un vehículo espacial, la medida sería más pequeña que si camináramos el accidentado perímetro costero de

> la isla; sin embargo, vista por una hormiga, que es capaz de recorrer los intersticios de las rocas, la medida resultaría de mayor magnitud. Así, mientras más pequeña sea la unidad de la medida, más compleja y extensa será la línea costera. (306)

He explains that, in contrast to Euclidian geometry, which is based on whole numbers and is thus of limited use for describing naturally-occurring phenomena, fractal geometry is effective for analyzing the complex patterns of recurrence through algorithms based on fragmentary, seemingly chaotic data. Systems may produce fractal patterns of (1) exact autosimilarity (resulting from abstract algorithms generated to produce exactly recurring patterns), (2) approximate autosimilarity (predictably recurring patterns with deviations, e.g., the geometry of crystal formations), and (3) aleatory autosimilarity, in which there are typically unpredictable variances in recurring patterns generated within systems that involve random variables and significant probability (e.g., social systems or weather patterns), but in which patterns of recurrence may be observed nevertheless (306).

He adapts these two principles of chaos mathematics –strange attractors ("dynamic regularities" not readily apparent in a seemingly chaotic system) and patterns of approximate and aleatory recurrence— to serve as the theoretical frameworks and metaphors that he applies to Caribbean sociocultural and literary analysis in *La isla*. The first adaptation is applied to the reiterative economic and socio-cultural historical patterns related to the plantation economies of Caribbean nations. This part of *La isla* ("De la

plantación a la Plantación," 1-50) further develops and justifies the premises that had been suggested in *El mar de las lentejas.* The Caribbean is viewed as a societal, historical, and economic area, or "mar histórico-económico principal" (*La isla* xiii), defined by the aleatory recurrence of the plantation system:

> La complejidad que la repetición de la Plantación –cada caso diferente— trajo al Caribe fue tal, que los mismos caribeños, al referirse a los procesos etnológicos derivados del descomunal choque de razas y culturas que ésta produjo, hablan de sincretismo, aculturación, transculturación, asimilación […] cimarronaje cultura, misceginación cultural, resistencia cultural, etc. Lo cual ilustra no sólo la repetición de estos procesos sino también, sobre todo, las diferentes posiciones o lecturas desde las cuales pueden ser examinados. (*La isla* 6)

Benítez Rojo identifies anthropologist Sidney W. Mintz's article "The Caribbean as a Socio-Cultural Area" as a particularly influential work in this aspect of his theoretical model ("De la plantación" 221, *La isla* 51-55). He further posits that the borders of the Caribbean are in this regard transgressed by the trans-Atlantic and trans-Caribbean "machinery" of colonial systems of socioeconomic control, production, and commerce. In this sense, the Caribbean is viewed not only as a physical archipelago but as a meta-archipielago that connects the resources and wealth of the Caribbean and Latin America to colonial and neo-colonial European and North American interests (vi-xiii).

On a more abstract level, *La isla* proposes polyrhythm, improvisation, and *super-syncretism* as reiterative traits of Caribbean cultural performance and ontology. Benítez Rojo asserts that improvisation is a distinctive trait of Caribbean cultural performance, particularly on account of the decentered, unpredictable, and "polyrhythmic" fluidity of migrations and epistemological, historical, and socioeconomic clashes in and out of the region (xxv-xxvi). He develops an endogenous, corporal metaphor of dancing and walking in a putatively Caribbean style to explain the management of exogenous elements affecting the Caribbean societal area, for which he offers the Deleuze-influenced metaphor of connected machines:

> Me refiero al complejísimo fenómeno que se suele llamar improvisación, y que se suele llamar improvisación, y que en el Caribe viente de muy atrás: del trance danzario […]. Pues bien, sin una dosis de improvisación no se podría dar con el ritmo de cada músculo; es preciso concederle a éstos la autonomía suficiente para que, por su cuenta y riesgo, lo descubran. Así, antes de conseguir caminar "de cierta manera", todo el cuerpo ha de pasar por una etapa de improvisación. [….] Ni siquiera bailar "de cierta manera" sirve de mucho si la tabla de valores que usamos se corresponde únicamente con una máquina tecnológica acoplada a una máquina industrial acoplada a una máquina comercial. [….] Cuando la cultura de un pueblo conserva antiguas dinámicas que juegan "de cierta manera", éstas se resisten a ser desplazadas por formas territorializadoras

> externas y se proponen coexistir con ellas a través de procesos sincréticos. (xxv-xxvi)

Benítez Rojo bases this concept of syncretic or "supersyncretic" (referring to the fluidity of cultural signification and slippages inherent in any claim of origin) improvisation, on his *sui generis* reading of Ortiz's theory of transculturation in *Contrapunteo cubano* (*La isla* 149-85). In doing so, he suggests that the theory and poetics of transculturation articulated and performed in Ortiz's text provide an endogenous but comparable alternative for trans-Caribbean cultural and literary theory to European postmodernist theory, e.g., *La condition post-moderne* by Jean-François Lyotard (172-85).

A View From the Mangrove (1998) completes the trilogy in the genre of the short story. According to the prefatory "Author's Note," the switch to short fiction serves the double purpose of representing "the historical complexity and ethnic and linguistic diversity of the Caribbean" and to perform a "heterogeneous and polyrhythmic" aesthetics of textual organization (ix-x).

4.3 *Mujer en traje de batalla* (2001): Overview and Critical Reception

Mujer en traje de batalla, presented as the memoir of the fictional octogenarian Faber in New York, is structured as a complex intimate history that is divided into six sections titled for the male and female loves of her life. The sections are "Robert" (23-

92), “Maryse” (93-194), “Fauriel” (195-278), “Nadezhda” (279-334), “Christopher” (387-95), and “Juanita” (421-508). Besides emphasizing Faber’s bisexuality, the titles interpolate three names of fictional characters (Maryse, Fauriel, and Nadezhda) between the names of Faber’s historically-documented spouses, Robert and Juana. The structural configuration emphasizes the lack of documented information on the historical Faber between 1809, when she was widowed at the age of eighteen (Bacardí y Moreau 218), and 1819, when she married León (Bacardí y Moreau 219, Camayd-Freixas). The purely fictional content, spanning the “Fauriel,” “Nadezhda,” and “Christopher” sections, do not represent a revisionist rewriting of history as much as they perform the bridging of a critical gap of information in Faber’s biography.

The questions related to the lost decade are subject to speculation in the Cuban documentation of her case. Under what circumstances had Faber decided to disguise herself as a man to become a surgeon? Why did she leave Europe for the Caribbean? What kind of relationship experiences had she had prior to her four-year marriage to León? The structure of *Mujer* marginalizes her time in Cuba (“Juana”) and, more specifically, her trial and expulsion, which constitute the focal point of the documentation surrounding the historical Faber. In the structural logic of *Mujer*, Faber’s 1819-1823 relationship with and conviction on account of Juana (469-95) is presented as equally peripheral but in fact even less worthy of comment than her relationship with Robert (27-28, 30-32, 35-36, 52-56, 60-92), which also spanned four years (1805-1809). In terms of page count, the episode with Juana is limited to twenty-seven pages, out of a five-

hundred-ten-page novel, while the relationship with Robert occupies nearly double the textual space, at fifty-three pages.

According to a similar logic of displacement, Faber is not referred to by the Cuban-given name of Enriqueta Faber in *Mujer,* although the novel is in Spanish. She is Henriette Faber-Cavent. Henriette comes from the French Swiss town of Foix, by way of Lausanne and, more remotely, Geneva and Languedoc (39-42). Her origins are circuitous. Her maternal grandparents had first arrived in Geneva, the center of Calvinism, fleeing religious persecution in Languedoc but had paradoxically converted to Catholicism once there. They were subsequently obliged to take refuge from Calvinist persecution in Lausanne. There her mother, Suzanne Cavent, met and married Henriette's father Paul Faber, "dueño de una modesta imprenta" (39). Like the all of her Cavent ancestors, they married without any other consideration than love: "Todos estos casamientos tuvieron como única razón el amor, pues ninguna de las hijas de mi abuelo disponía de otra dote que no fuera una sólida educación conservadora" (39). Henriette's birth in Lausanne coincides with the ascent to power of Robespierre in France. An accidental fire destroys her house and kills her parents shortly after Robespierre's downfall (40-41). In this way, she is also a tangential child of the French Revolution. In spite of the frequent mention of her Lausanne origins in the historical documentation (Calcagno, "Faver" 93, Fernández de Cuevas 58, Marrero 53, Pancrazio, "Introducción" 12), she was taken to Foix, by way of France, and raised between Foix, Switzerland, and

Toulouse, France for all practical purposes in the novel, from the age of three years old (41-43).

The fictional Maryse Polidor, to whom Henriette is introduced at the same time as Robert (30-31), is the central character in her life and memoir according to *Mujer,* a fact to which the elderly framing memoirist alludes toward the beginning of her narration: "¡Ay, Maryse, mi querida Maryse! [A]l recordarte, al detallar tu boca, se me hace difícil dejarte en escena en calidad de personaje menor, de simple partiquina en esta suerte de ópera cómica que voy componiendo […]" (33). The main narrative arc in the novel chronicles the friendship between Henriette and Maryse. It spans four-hundred-fifty pages (13-461). To borrow a metaphor from Benítez Rojo's previous work, Faber's romantic interests (Robert, Fauriel, Nadezhda, and Juana) may be viewed as an archipelago of episodic islands within an oceanic textuality represented by her relationship with Maryse. Maryse's name may be a compound construction that incorporates a tribute to Benítez Rojo's friend, the novelist and Caribbeanist scholar from Guadeloupe Maryse Condé, and a complimentary compound lexeme, "Poli d'or" (Camayd-Freixas 41). Maryse Polidor represents a revised version of the wealthy, untalented, decadent, and sadistic planter-émigré actress from Saint-Domingue (present-day Haiti), Mademoiselle Floridor, who is an incidental but memorably odious character in the much-noted novel *El reino de este mundo* (1949) by Alejo Carpentier (Collard 157-87). Maryse is described as a recent émigré from Saint-Domingue at the beginning of *Mujer* (30), but the reader comes to understand that, unlike Floridor, she is a refugee from

the counterrevolutionary terror of Rochambeau and the yellow fever epidemic, a history to be explored in detail later in this chapter. At the start of the novel, she has returned to Paris to host a traveling salon, which develops into a nomadic theater, with Bonaparte's army. She is like a composite version of influential feminists and salon and theater organizers of the French Enlightenment from Olympe de Gouges to Madame Pompadour. When Henriette is exiled from Cuba at the end of the novel, she grieves over Maryse, who has recently drowned in the Almendares River in Havana, but bids good riddance to the island of "sugar and slavery": "muerta Maryse, nada me ataba a aquella isla enferma de azúcar y esclavitud. [S]ería expulsada de ella, pero más que castigo era recompensa" (495). A synopsis of the whole novel may be assembled with regard to Maryse's friendship and mentorship to Henriette.

In "Robert" (23-92), Henriette has her first intimate physical contact, with the young Hussar, at a salon hosted by Maryse (36). After her aunt and caretaker Margot dies of a heart attack the same night, her uncle Charles-Henri Cavent, an officer and surgeon in Bonaparte's army, agrees to let Henriette travel with the Grand Armée during the 1805 campaign through northern Europe, on the condition that she remain under Maryse's protection (44-51). When she loses her virginity, at the age of fourteen, to Robert, who is in his mid-twenties, during a fleeting reunion in Strasbourg, Maryse obliges him to marry her (54-55). She further devises the plan to costume Henriette as a Turkish Mameluke, her first "traje de batalla," so that she can visit Robert in the front ranks of the Grand Armée unharassed (65).

The second section, "Maryse" (93-194), will be the major point of focus of this chapter. For the purposes of synopsis, it should be summarily noted that Henriette develops a relativist sense of morality and learns strategies of improvisational adaptability while traveling with a variety theater run by Maryse called the "Théâtre Nomade," which continues to follow Bonaparte's army through the War of the Fifth Coalition. After Robert has been killed in the battle of Pultusk (91-92), Henriette is mentored by Maryse, learns about her past involvement in support of the government of Toussaint L'Ouverture in Saint-Domingue, and begins to be caught up in a shared trans-Atlantic, trans-Caribbean itinerant fate with her friend as they travel together through northeastern Europe between 1806 and 1810. The section ends with Henriette having initiated her career as a physician. After a barrel of powder used to create pyrotechnic effects for the Théâtre Nomade explodes near her friend, she assists her uncle for several weeks tending to Maryse's critical injuries (189-91). She determines that medicine is her vocation and devises the plan to disguise herself as a man to attend medical school in Paris, with her friend's encouragement (192). Maryse migrates to Havana with a plantation owner named Julián Robledo, with whom she has fallen in love against her better judgment (136-50, 191-93).

The following three sections –"Fauriel," "Nadezhda," and "Christopher"— complete the arc of Henriette's coming-of-age narrative, in which she comes to an awareness of her bisexuality after a tentative exploration with a fellow "passing woman" at medical school, Raymond Fauriel (250-77) and an intense love affair with a Russian

nurse named Ivánovna Nadezhda (323-30). She arrives at a sense of being a secure, whole, and fulfilled person (329-30). She approaches an authenticity "en todo el sentido Sartreano" that paradoxically is only possible through her dissimulation that she is a man from Havana (Camayd-Freixas 20). Even in her absence, Maryse plays a major role in this dissimulation, in that she provides Henriette, by mail, with the forged Cuban documents necessary for her to enter medical school, along with periodically-updated information on Havana for her to improvise a false Cuban identity (210-12, 219, 239-42, 244-46, 249-50, 297). In "Christopher," her uncle dies of a heart attack in Spain. She becomes pregnant by Christopher O'Gorman, a surgeon with Wellingon's troops, and loses the baby in Foix. The restoration to power and property of the returning French émigré royalists, aristocrats, and theocratic Catholics creates a political climate that she finds unlivable. This completes her series of reversals after the end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1814 and precipitates her ultímate decision to travel to Cuba in order to visit Maryse (419-20).

The first half of the "Juana" section is dedicated to the denouement of the Maryse plot line in Havana (426-61). To be brief, a mysterious disease causes Robledo to lose his mental faculties. While Henriette is in the middle of applying for her title and credentials from the Havana Protomedicato, in order to be allowed to purchase medical supplies to attempt a cure (452-53), Robledo drowns in the Almendares river along with Maryse, who has apparently committed suicide (457-61). While she is grieving over Maryse's death and settling her friend's affairs, the Havana Protomedicato grants her

accreditation and assigns her, under the masculine identity of Enrique Faber, to serve on the Protomedicato of Baracoa, a provincial town on the southeastern coast of the island (462-63). She decides to accept the position, "hastiada de La Habana y de vivir en casa que era mía" (463). She finds the "placid state" in Baracoa "propicio a la rememoración de mi querida Maryse" (469), until she is betrayed by Juana de León and goes through the trial and sentence that constitute all of the Cuban documentation on the historical Faber. As previously mentioned, Henriette is not particularly aggrieved at having to leave Cuba. In the novel's framing process of memoir writing, the reader comes to learn that the elderly Henriette has assumed Maryse's former role of mentorship for a traveling companion and friend named Milly (382-87).

Critics have written the most about *Mujer en traje de batalla* as a work of historical fiction within the Latin American tradition and about the issues of gender explored in the work. Erik Camayd-Freixas examines the experimental structure of the novel, which he relates to Benítez Rojo's study of chaos mathematics. According to Camayd-Freixas's analysis, *Mujer* presents an innovative "new type of realism" modeled after the fractal-based system of geometry developed by Benoît Mandelbrot in 1975 (22). For Roberto González Echevarría, *Mujer en traje de batalla* represents a new departure in the Latin American historical novel, including Benítez Rojo's previous novel, *El mar de las lentejas*, on account of its unironically sentimental tone and focus on an intimate narrative in spite of the novel's "periplo histórico-geográfico de vastas proporciones" (Rev. of *Mujer* 17). More specifically, he finds that *Mujer* abandons the Carpentier-

influenced meditation on "Latin-American identity and the specificity of its literature" that, for the critic, characterizes *El mar* (16). He finds it an entertaining and approachable novel of characters with depth, "sin permitirse las ya manidas piruetas formales de las novelas vanguardistas" (17).

Ivonne Cuadra focuses on the portrayal of Faber's cross-dressing in the novel, in light of Marjorie Garber's theoretical approach to transvestitism as a "third," non-sexual space in which cultural constructions of gender are confronted and transgressed. In particular, she views the positive portrayal of Faber's transvestitism in *Mujer en traje de batalla* as a metacritical response to the Cuban historical novels written about her during the 1890s, in which "se perpetúa el orden decimonónico al servir de contra-ejemplo de la norma" ("El travestismo de Enriqueta Faber" 226). According to Cuadra, Benítez Rojo's novel vindicates Faber in the terms of post-structural feminist theory: "[…] Faber tuvo éxito en algunos momentos de su vida asumiendo el género masculino; sin embargo, es dentro de la ficción de Benítez Rojo donde finalmente se puede liberar y romper las barreras del sexo, del género, del tiempo y del espacio" (226).

James Pancrazio comments briefly on the novel in a discussion of the gradual, positive reevaluation of Faber in light of the performance of gender in Cuban writing from Andrés Clemente Vázquez's 1894 novel, *Enriqueta Faber; ensayo de novela histórica* to Emilio Roig de Leuchsenring's "La primera mujer médica" (1965) to *Mujer en traje de batalla.* In most of the literature, Faber is presented generally as "una precursora del feminismo y la igualdad entre los sexos" ("Introducción" 29). Pancrazio

distinguishes Benítez Rojo's version: "En la novela de Benítez Rojo, Faber representa la lucha para la liberación gay-lésbica" (29).

Finally, for Benítez Rojo, Faber constitutes a "total hero," a synthesis between human agency to act authentically within a given "aleatory" moment of history, as well as a hero for gender equality: "[T]omé la decisión de hacer de Enriqueta no solo un héroe femenino sino uno total, es decir, un ser humano que lucha contra viento y marea para actuar según sus códigos, aunque éstos no coincidan con los de la sociedad de su tiempo" ("Entrevista" 135). This view corroborates Benítez Rojo's assessment that his overall body of work tended to expand in scope from the particular and the national toward a broadening "displacement": "[O]bservo […] un desplazamiento hacia afuera, hacia lo global: primero fue Cuba, después el Caribe, ahora el mundo, lo cual queda ejemplificado con mi última novela [*Mujer en traje de batalla*]" ("Entrevisto por *Encuentro*" 15).

4.4 Cuban Archival Appropriation of Enriqueta Faber as Paratextual Frame in *Mujer en traje de batalla*: From Calcagno to Leví Marrero

According to the novel's afterword "Nota del autor" (509-10), Faber's life is "prácticamente desconocida fuera de Cuba" (510). The "Nota" provides a summary of the basic facts about her, followed by a list of eight works consulted, of which seven are indeed of Cuban origin, either from the island or from U.S. Cuban exile. Because the scope of information about the historical Faber and several of the details provided in

Benítez Rojo's novel are elaborated in ways that deviate from the documentation, it seems worthwhile to summarize the elements of her biography that are considered to be factual before analyzing the narrative fiction. Four of the eight works cited in the "Nota del autor" are by historians from the island: Emilio Bacardí y Moreau's 1919 compilation of chronicles from the archives of Santiago de Cuba, *Crónicas de Santiago de Cuba;* María Julia de Laura's 1964 article on women pioneers in Cuban medicine, "Laura Martìnez de Carvajal y del Camino (primera graduada de medicina en Cuba) en el septuagésimo quinto aniversario de su graduación (15 de julio de 1889);" Emilio Roig de Leuchsenring's 1965 history of Cuban medicine, *Médicos y medicina en Cuba: historia, biografía, costumbrismo;* and Inciano D. Toirac Escasena's 1998 narrative history of the city of Baracoa, *Baracoa: vicisitudes y florecimiento.* The only work cited not written by an author of Cuban national origin, whether on or off the island, is the historical novel *Enriqueta Faber* (1894), which is by Andrés Clemente Vázquez, a Mexican ambassador to Spanish colonial Cuba (Cuadra 226).

Vázquez's novel serves as the closest literary model for *Mujer en traje de batalla,* as it narrates Faber's life story from the time of her youth during the Napoleonic Wars, through her trials in Cuba, and imagines a denouement that occurs outside of the island, after her expulsion (Pancrazio, "Introducción" 38). Three sources constitute nationalistic projects of Cuban exile historiography. The first two, Francisco Calcagno's *Diccionario biográfico cubano* (1878) and Calcagno's historical novel *Un casamiento misterioso* (1894), were produced and published in New York City during the period of Cuba's wars

of independence from Spain. In that *Mujer en traje de batalla* departs from the premise that an elderly Faber writes her own memoir in Manhattan around 1870 (25-27, 396), the novel posits Calcagno's work as its most immediate competitive model, in terms of both time frame and geographical proximity. The third source of Cuban exile historiography is the brief 1988 article on Faber in the fourteen-volume work by Leví Marrero, *Cuba: economía y sociedad* (1971-1990). Of the sources listed in the "Nota del autor," it is Marrero's work that is cited as an epigraph at the beginning of the novel:

> El prejuicio que cerraba a las mujeres toda oportunidad de ejercer profesiones y oficios que la tradición reservaba a los hombres, dramatizó la vida de una dama audaz y emprendedora que, vestida de hombre y graduada como cirujano, sirvió como militar en Europa sin ser descubierto su secreto, que vendría a ser revelado en Cuba en 1823. (9)

The list of four epigraphs that appears at the beginning of *Mujer* resembles the lists of three to four epigraphs that appear at the beginning of each volume of Marrero's *Cuba,* in terms of content and graphic layout. Marrero's epigraphs present brief statements, most of which are related to the importance of history to the identity of a society and how history should be written in order to be as precise as possible. They are from sources of diverse national origin, with the writers' names printed in all-capital letters and right-justified below the quotation. This format is consistent in each of the fourteen volumes, which were published over a nineteen-year span (1971-1990). By way of example, the epigraphs at the beginning of Volume Twelve appear as follows:

> La historia debe escribirse sobre testimonios de primera mano... La verdad histórica no puede depender de interpretaciones de segunda mano, como no puede la justicia depender de rumores.
>
> ERNEST R. MAY
>
> Constituye la historia el pasado de aquellas sociedades que buscan esclarecer y mantener su identidad en el presente.
>
> J. G. A. POPOCK
>
> El pasado debe estar siempre ante nuestros ojos, mas no para envolverlo en una aureola de luz intensa que nos deslumbre, sino para escudriñarlo sin pasión y arrancarle sin temor sus enseñanzas.
>
> ENRIQUE JOSÉ VARONA (12:iv)

The epigraphs for *Mujer en traje de batalla* are, with the unique exception of the Marrero quotation, about the poetic agency of history and imaginative literature. They appear in a format that is similar to that of Marrero's epigraphs, with the addition of the title of the works in which the quotations may be found:

> "El prejuicio que cerraba a las mujeres toda oportunidad de profesiones y oficios […] dramatizó la vida de una dama audaz y emprendedora que, vestida de hombre […] sirvió como militar en Europa sin ser desubierto su secreto, que vendría a ser revelado en Cuba en 1823."
>
> LEVÍ MARRERO, *Cuba: economía y sociedad*

"No me joda con la historia en materia de teatro. Lo que cuenta aquí es la ilusión poética."

ALEJO CARPENTIER, *Concierto barroco*

"Todo tendrá que ser reconstruido, invencionado de nuevo."

JOSÉ LEZAMA LIMA, *La expresión americana*

"Lo cierto es, doctor que a no sé si me pasó a mí o si le pasó a mi amiguita si lo inventé yo misma. […]."

GUILLERMO CABRERA INFANTE, *Tres tristes tigres* (9)

The fragment of Marrero's article on Faber in *Cuba: economía y sociedad* is thus categorized, in the epigraph at the beginning of *Mujer en traje de batalla*, with a group of quotes from or about Cuban imaginative fiction, including fragments of narrative fiction by Alejo Carpentier and Guillermo Cabrera Infante and from an essay on literature and historical imaginary by poet and novelist José Lezama Lima. The common theme underlying such a grouping may be viewed in light of, first, the monumental Cuban exile archival project that Marrero's work represents, and, second, of a metacritical commentary on the tangle of documentation, rhetoric, and narrative fiction that constitutes the historical documentation of Enriqueta Faber. With regard to the overall work of *Cuba:economía y sociedad*, Marrero introduces it as a project to reconstruct, from his position as "Ex-Profesor de Historia Económica de Cuba," an appellation that appears on the title page of each volume, "the Cuban historical event" from U.S. space:

> Intentar la reconstrucción del acontecer histórico cubano [...]. [....] Durante muchas y a veces tensas horas entre libros, mapas, copias de legajos, folios y fichas, muchos de ellos adquiridos o reconstruidos más de una vez, hemos visto pasar ante nuestra vista, como en un film entrañable, el devenir de una patria que nunca ha estado lejos. (1:vii)

The work covers fourteen tomes and presents an encyclopedic history of the emergence of a "Cuban national consciousness" between the sixteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Marrero dates the origins of the project to 1940 and the end of its "Cuban phase" to 1960, when he left the island and shifted his focus to the reconstruction of his personal archive from sources in the United States and Spain:

> Cuando finalizaba el año 1960 debimos poner término a la etapa cubana de nuestra investigación. Interrumpido el propósito quedaron detrás archivo y biblioteca personales, pero logramos retener los capítulos ya redactados en versión inicial, los cuales cubrían hasta bien entrado el siglo XVIII. Durante estos últimos diez años hemos logrado, en visitas a archivos y bibliotecas de España y de Estados Unidos, reconstruir fichas, compulsar notas y enriquecer nuestra visión histórica con nuevos hallazgos y noticias. (12:xiv)

In 1990, he described the project in terms predicated on return, expressing the belief that it would be restored to a post-revolutionary Cuba and carried on by the next generation of

Republican Cuban historians, with the benefit of access to the archival and other documentary sources on the island:

> Próximo a cumplir los ochenta años de vida que me ha concedido la bondad de Dios –treinta de ellos fuera de la Patria—, confiamos que esta tarea será continuada en una Cuba democrática por historiadores jóvenes, amantes de la verdad y liberados de las frustrantes bridas ideológicas felizmente ya descreditadas, quienes dispondrán de los copiosos fondos documentales y bibliográficos de nuestros ricos archivos y bibliotecas a los cuales, en medio de la larga noche del totalitarismo, no hemos tenido acceso los desterrados. (7:ix)

James Parsons praises Marrero as a sort of epic Cuban exile hero, on account of the isolated and solitary nature of his effort to write the "magnum opus" of Cuban national history from away from the island: "La obra magna [...] es aún más notable por ser el producto de los esfuerzos de un estudioso solitario, trabajando aislado y sin apoyo exterior, enfrentado a veces con dificultades que pudiesen parecer invencibles" ("Leví Marrero"13:vi). Lisandro Pérez praises Marrero by way of a similar appeal to the trope of the rugged individual persevering in the labor of his people from a sort of inhospitable wilderness of exile:

> Ese es el destino del exilio: proscrito en cuerpo y obra. Marrero debe conformarse con el aplauso de la comunidad en el exilio y de la comunidad académica mundial. Pero no recibirá ningún reconocimiento

> de su tierra natal –"el suelo eterno de Cuba", como la llamó una vez. Pero la palabra escrita –especialmente un clásico—es inmortal, y el legado de Marrero trascenderá más allá de su vida y más allá de estos tiempos de sufrimiento y división en la nación cubana. Es probable que Leví Marrero nunca regrese a Cuba, pero su obra sí regresará. ("El legado" 14:vii).

The entry on Enriqueta Faber appears in the fourteenth and final volume of Marrero's work, as previously mentioned. "La cirujana suiza" is included in the section on the medical profession in Cuba, which focuses on the bureaucratic reforms enacted by the Count of Ricla, the first governor of Cuba during the Spanish Restoration, including the establishment of the Junta de Protomédicos (Protomedicato) (14:49-52) and on reforms in the field of Cuban medicine initiated by Dr. Tomás Romay (1769-1849) (52-54). The entry on Faber thematically reinforces the information on the bureaucratic restrictions imposed by the Protomedicato against the practice of medicine by Cubans of color ("los que conocidamente se tenían por pardos") and by doctors from outside of Cuba or Spanish territory (49-52).

Faber is presented as a colorful foreign character who, by deceptive wit, was able to evade the exclusionist authority of the Protomedicato for a short period of time. Eventually, the article tells us, she was discovered and targeted for not being of Cuban or Spanish origin. It was only later she was taken to court and discovered to be a woman. The article develops a subtext in which the severity of discriminatory colonial Cuban law is shown to be distinct from the essential goodness and open-mindedness of the Cubans

involved in the case, beginning with the putatively benevolent advocacy of "the respected Bishop Espada," unspecified "favorable testimonies," and the asserted absence of any accusation of immorality, all resulting in a reasonable-sounding reduced sentence of performing "services as a surgeon," in contrast to "ten years of prison" in a "notorious" penal institution:

> El respetado Obispo Espada expresó sus simpatías por la acusada, quien fuera condenada inicialmente a diez años de cárcel en la notoria Casa de Recogidas de La Habana. Contra la señora Faber no hubo acusación de tipo moral y sí testimonio favorables. Apelada la sentencia fue reducida a cuatro años de servicios como cirujana en el Hospital de mujeres de San Francisco de Paula y a ser deportada de los dominios españoles tras cumplir la pena. (53)

Likewise, Marrero cites the gallant defense of Faber by Don Manuel Lorenzo de Vidaurre, "a distinguished jurist from Puerto Príncipe":

> [L]o insólito del caso movió a un distinguido jurista de Puerto Príncipe, Don Manuel Lorenzo de Vidaurre, a asumir su defensa. Alegaría en el juicio el defensor que si existía un crimen, no era el de la dama, sino de la sociedad que obligaba a la viuda de un cirujano del ejército francés, a vestir ropas masculinas para ganarse la vida ejerciendo una profesión para la cual tenía toda clase de calificaciones. (53)

Finally, Marrero offers a happy ending to Faber's story in that, although she was sent into exile, history has vindicated her as the first known female doctor in Cuba. She is thus recognized as an honorary Cuban. The air of moralistic fiction about the article, which is captured in the first epigraph to *Mujer en traje de batalla*, and the improbable-seeming magnanimous and effectual performances of Espada and Vidaurre, can be accounted for by a closer examination of the two sources cited at the end of Marrero's entry on Faber. The sources are Emilio Bacardí y Moreau's *Crónicas de Santiago de Cuba* (1909) and Emilio Roig de Leuchsenring's "La primera mujer médico en Cuba, en 1819" (1965).

Bacardí y Moreau's reproduction of the 1823 record titled "Faver," from the municipal chronicle of Santiago, is concise and straightforward. It notes Faber's embarkment to Havana, followed by a terse, paragraph-length summary of the details of her court case (2:218-19). There is no mention of Espada or Vidaurre. The record seems to provide Marrero's source of information for asserting that Faber's guilt was not related to sexual misconduct:

> [D]e la libertad de acción, no se le conoce ninguna nota de mujer perdida o prostituta. (*Crónicas* 2:218)
>
> Por su conducta y declaraciones de testigos, no era mujer pervertida ni de costumbres malsanas o licenciosas (2:219).

Marrero's section on Faber seems to rely to the greatest extent on Roig's article, which is a casual piece of writing that originally appeared in the popular magazine

Vanidades. The main idea is to commemorate Enriqueta Faber as a precursor of feminism and, as such, a source of Cuban pride. The past oppression of women during the island's colonial period is invoked at the same time, to inspire patriotic pride in the "absolute equality of civil and political rights" between genders in the national value system of twentieth-century Cuba:

> Enriqueta Faber puede ser considerada pionera del movimiento feminista triunfante ya en casi todo el mundo y felizmente en nuestra patria. Hoy en día, en que la mujer goza en Cuba de absoluta igualdad de derechos civiles y políticos con el hombre, sin necesidad de vestir trajes masculinos, hubiera podido estudiar, graduarse y ejercer de doctor en Medicina. Es ella la primera mujer médico que ha habido en nuestro país, legalmente aceptada por el Protomedicato de La Habana. (156)

Camayd-Freixas and Pancrazio demonstrate that Roig's article relies heavily on the novel *Enriqueta Faber* (1894) by Andrés Clemente Vázquez as a primary historical source (Camayd-Freixas 32, Pancrazio, "Introducción" 34-38). Pancrazio observes that Roig not only relies on Vázquez's fiction as a primary historical source, but that he reproduces, word for word, dialogue from the novel (Roig 149n). By way of example, Pancrazio points out dialogue attributed to Vidaurre in Vázquez, which is cited in Roig's article. Vidaurre probably did not, in fact, participate in Faber's trial:

> El problema […] es que esta defensa es parte de la ficción inventada por Clemente Vázquez. La amplia bibliografía de Manuel de Vidaurre, que sí

> residió en Cuba durante esta época, no contiene ninguna referencia al caso de Enriqueta Faber. Una lectura cuidadosa de la novela de Clemente Vázquez, además revela que las notas al pie de página indican que "algunas" de las palabras del personaje que forman la defensa provienen de un texto publicado sobre un proyecto de reforma al Código Criminal. (38)

Roig concludes "La primera mujer médico" with a citation of Vidaurre putatively arguing "in [Faber's] defense":

> –Vuestro nombre, Enriqueta, pasará a la historia de Cuba con los respetos de las almas grandes y de los corazones generosos… Por mi parte, después de haberlo meditado mucho, y de haber sometido vuestra conducta al crisol de mi conciencia honrada y al escalpelo de mi austero carácter, os absuelvo completamente y sin reservas… (156)

Roig's device of concluding with "Vidaurre" "absolving" Faber in Cuban history, as a sort of cross between judge and priest, cited in Roig from Vázquez's novel, and with Marrero subsequently citing Vidaurre's defense per Roig, is similar to the previously mentioned extradiagetic narrative voice that addresses Henriette in the friendly "tú" form in the prefatory chapter "A bordo de la goleta *Collector*" and, again, toward the beginning of the eleventh chapter, just before she changes her appearance and name in preparation for medical school (214-15). In Benítez Rojo's novel, however, rather than pass judgment and administer absolution, the voice performs an advisory function, which

would be closer to the role of a defense attorney outside of the courtroom. The citation of "Vidaurre" in Roig above bears some resemblance to the framing extradiagetic voice of *Mujer en traje de batalla,* in presenting a less wishful version of what Henriette might expect from her long "trial" by history:

> Si alcanzas a pasar a la historia, será en calidad de libertina, en el mejor de los casos, de infame impostura. Magistrados, escribanos, testigos, registros, legajos, firmas cuños, en fin, todos los instrumentos de la jurisprudencia se han concertado para alinearse en tu contra; han omitido las declaraciones que te favorecían, exagerando las que te perjudicaban. Te han juzgado con premura, con determinación, como si fueras un aborrecible error de la sociedad que hay que rectificar enseguida. (14-15)

The pessimistic assessment of the advocate that frames *Mujer* represents Faber's place in Calcagno's nineteenth-century Cuban exile historiography, following legal "refundiciones a menudo sensacionalistas" (Camayd-Freixas 23) like "Causa célebre" (1860) by Laureano Fernández de Cuevas. Fernández de Cuevas first presents Faber in xenophobic terms, as a counter-example to the Cuban creole values of "proper moral upbringing," "religious belief,"and respect for the "conservative Catholic social institutions," and, in particular, the sacrament of marriage:

> Enriqueta es un vivo ejemplo de lo que es la mujer sin […] esa educación moral propia y conveniente a su sexo […]. [….] En efecto, suiza de nacimiento pero hija de la Revolución francesa; educada, digámosle así,

> en medio de los ejércitos de Napoleón el Grande […] no era posible que su inteligencia y su corazón dejasen de participar del anarquismo intelectual de la época, de su completa desmoralización y falta de creencia religiosa. No es extraño verla despreciar una de las instituciones más conservadoras de la sociedad, el matrimonio; y que siendo protestante lo contemple como cualquier otro contrato civil […]. (55)

In this sense, Fernández's text reinforces Camayd-Freixas's and Pancrazio's observations, based on Foucault's *Surveiller et punir* (1977), René Girard's *La violence et le sacré* (1972), and Emilio Bejel's *Gay Cuban Nation* (2001), that Faber's case exemplifies the reinforcement of national identity through the punishment and exclusion of a marginal, foreign element (Camayd-Freixas 20, Pancrazio, "Introducción" 47). Invoking a collective "we," "Causa célebre" endorses the expulsion of Faber and, implicitly, the commemoration of her punishment, on the grounds that "masculine women" who commit "shockingly daring acts" are a corruptive influence against the delicate work of educating "our" women to be virtuous mothers:

> La mujer para nosotros es un ser débil a quien rodeamos desde la niñez de tiernos cuidados; la educación que procuramos darle, las máximas que le inculcamos y las consideraciones que le tenemos, todo tiende a hacer de su corazón una fuente de virtudes que madre algún día ha de hacer fructificar en el alma de sus hijos. Pero esa debilidad y esa terneza suele desmentirse

> a veces presentándose mujeres de carácter varonil cuyas acciones atrevidas asombran hasta a los hombres más valientes arrojados. (56)

Questions about Faber's case are raised in "Causa célebre" that later appear in Calcagno's *Diccionario biográfico cubano* in 1878 and in his historical novel *Un casamiento misterioso* in 1895. Fernández begins by citing Joan of Arc and Catalina de Erauso ("La Monja Alférez") as exceptional examples of women who, like Faber, transgressed gender boundaries but, unlike her, deserve "respect and admiration," because they dressed and acted like men out of sacrifice "for love of their fatherland ('*patria*')" (57). He acknowledges that, while Faber's impersonation of a Cuban man was unjustified, she had not commited any action that might be considered "perverse or criminal" until she "conceived the criminal and disgraceful idea of marrying [De León]":

> Una mujer varonil y atrevida, disfrazada con nuestros vestidos, ejerciendo una profesión peculiar nuestra y corriendo los azares de la guerra en medio de una vida llena de accidentes y contratiempos funestos, nada presta a obrar contra el individuo, aunque no sea natural ni bien mirado en la sociedad semejante modo de portarse. [....] Con el objeto tal vez de alejar más y más las sospechas, concibió la idea criminal y desgraciada de *casarse.* (60)

He submits that Faber married De León as a method of camouflage, in order to keep herself hidden in Cuban society. Her attempt to pass as Cuban is presented as a more egregious offense than her blending of gender identities. She was "disguised in our

clothing," worked in "a profession uniquely our own" (on the board of the Protomedicato), and, most of all, she was a corruptive influence in the education of one of "our" women (60). He raises two main questions while developing this line of argumentation. First, how and why did Faber originally come to Cuba? ("No sabemos de cierto en qué año vino a esta Isla ni en qué punto fijó su residencia al principio," 60). Second, how could she "sacreligiously mock [...] the Holy Sacrament most respected by mankind, the Sacrament considered to be the foundation of happiness and quietude of every civilized society"? In other words, why was she so desperate to remain on the island that she would sin against religion and society in order to avoid detection ("alejar [...] las sospechas")?

Fernández conjectures that she had been unable to establish herself anywhere but Baracoa, having not found "very favorable fortune" in Europe or, after that, in Guadeloupe. According to his narrative, she arrived in the provincial town by having followed the path of least resistance:

> Entonces volvió a París y solicitó pasar a la Guadalupe, y concedido que le fue el permiso, vino a esa Antilla francesa con sus correspondientes despachos. La fortuna no se le presentó allí muy propicia, así que determinó venir a esta Isla "sin mudar de traje, así porque estaba acostumbrada y bien hallada en la libertad que le proporcionaba el vestido de hombre, como porque con éste podía ejercer su profesión y adquirir

> fortuna [...].” [....] [P]asó a La Habana en donde el tribunal del Protomedicato la nombró su fiscal en la ciudad.” (60-61)

Faber is thus framed as a parasitic outsider whose incompetence and poor moral judgment caused her post in Baracoa to be quickly put in jeopardy:

> [S]e presentó un comprofesor suyo pidiendo se anulase por “ser funciones tan incompetentes con el mencionado individuo, decía que el menos sensato de esta población halla chocante [...]”. Acúsale también de que el Sr. Párroco le había extraído y quemado “varias efigies obscenas y libros heréticos que conservaba contra nuestra católica religión” y por último decía que se había “hecho bautizar para obtener las gracias de una cariblanca con quien casó, que estimó más lo bello que su religión”. (63)

Fernández likewise blames these two fundamental faults –incompetence and moral relativism—for Enriqueta’s inability to sustain the deception of her marriage with Juana. He cites the more salacious parts of De León’s legal complaint as the “principal motives on which her petition is founded,” suggesting a pattern of continuity underlying her career of misfortunes and migrations:

> La Faber es acusada de haber fingido consumar el matrimonio “de un modo artificial que entonces no pudo comprender” la León [...]. Ciertas incomodidades y circunstancias que “la decencia no permite referir” la obligaron a espiarla continuamente; hasta que un día [...] se descuidó y le vio “los pechos de una mujer [...]”. Este descubrimiento la obligó a

> confesar "su incapacidad para el estado conyugal" y el modo "de que se había valido para consumar su perversa maquinación". Acusa Juana de León a Faber de haberle hecho entonces proposiciones indignas de toda persona que conserva algún resto de moralidad [...] pero vista su repulsa y la indignación [...] le ofreció desaparecer a fin de que nadie supiese su paradero [...]. (63)

Faber does not bear the responsibility her shortcomings, however, including the crime of having married a young Cuban woman. According to the analysis developed in "Causa célebre," she suffered from the combination of a congenital temperamental and mental defect –"[n]acida con el temperamento e imaginación ardientes"—that was exacerbated by the desensitizing environment of the Napoleonic Wars in which she was raised –"llena su mente de ideas que en aquellos tiempos de guerra y heroísmo hacían olvidar la sangre derramada y los llantos de las viudas y huérfanos" (59). Most crucially, "the unfortunate Enriqueta" had lacked proper guidance and education: "[L]a desgraciada Enriqueta hubo de seguir ciegamente su fatalismo en las inclinaciones que su organismo le señalaba, no tenía quien supiera vencerlas o modificarlas" (59). Her trial and punishment in Cuba, in this sense, are proposed to have been to her ultimate benefit. According to Fernández, Faber's sentence in Havana and her subsesquent commendation to the Sisters of Charity in New Orleans eventually led her to find the authoritative, male guidance that had she had lacked. Employing the literary device of the discovery of a happy ending in an unexpected letter, Fernández claims that a doctor named D. Juan de

Mendizábal of Veracruz, Mexico had written to him with the latest news about Faber. She had allegedly become sincerely rehabilated as a nun, had worked as a midwife under Mendizábal's protection, and was, as of 1848, supposed to be working in the "Hospital de Caridad" in New Orleans, where she would fulfill her "piadoso y humanitario ministerio y acabar santamente sus días" (68).

To summarize, Fernández blames Faber's perverted education for her itinerant life of crime impersonating a man, a doctor, and, finally, a Cuban. According to the author, her career was an inevitable failure due to two underlying faults: incompetence (professional and, in marriage, sexual) and the lack of a righteous moral code. Her migrations followed a repetitious pattern of hopeless attempts to escape this failure, i.e., moving from Europe to Guadeloupe to Havana to, finally, Baracoa, where she acted as a parasitic foreigner not only disguised in men's clothing but also taking on uniquely Cuban work on the Protomedicato, until the vicious cycle was finally broken by Juana de León. Rather than allow Faber to disappear once more, De León filed the legal complaint that would ultimately lead her to the authoritative male guidance that the Swiss surgeon had been lacking and, consequently, to redemption. In the logic of Fernández's analysis, De León, and, by extension, Cuba, reversed the deception attempted by Faber, which would have deprived the innocent and candid young Cuban woman of education as a mother and the guidance of a husband. In the end, Juana and Cuba make Faber a bride of the Church and a midwife. Historian Lynn Friedli provides context on the education of

women during the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century and on the symbolic threat that "passing women" were believed to represent:

> By the end of the eighteenth century, the dominant identity for women was that of wife and mother. [...] What is new is an understanding of these roles as constituting a specific status or profession [...]. [....] Concern with population [...] as well as the enormous influence of Locke's notion of *tabula rasa,* meant the environment of the child was seen as crucial. Ultimately all women must be educated to become mothers who contribute positively to the health and good habits of their children. [....] The deception of passing women encompasses an implied rejection of the maternal role and appropriation of the sexual role of the male. (Friedli 235-38)

At the same time, Friedli indicates that the reason "passing women" who had been discovered having married a spouse of the same sex would only be legally prosecuted for fraud, while a man would be charged with sodomy, is that women were believed to be "constitutionally more susceptible to influence; more credulous": "Women, then, are easily deceived but also more capable of deception" (237-38).

In this light, Fernández's positive conclusion on Faber is in fact congratulatory of the role that closed Cuban society played in the "repentance" and redemption of the wayward "Swiss surgeon" and complimentary in only a back-handed way toward Faber's "good heart" and "great intelligence":

> Tal es la historia de esa mujer extraordinaria a quien una educación pervertida, más bien que su índole llevó a la carrera del crimen, su arrepentimiento es bastante para conocer que su corazón era bueno como era grande su inteligencia. (68)

The narrative of Faber's crime, punishment, and reform may thus be read as a parable of Cuban exceptionalism and isolationism.

Calcagno's entry on "Faver" appears in the previously-mentioned 1878 *Diccionario biográfico cubano,* a work that he compiled in New York for the stated purpose of codifying an exemplary moral basis for the Cuban nation: "trazar la vida de los hombres ilustres que nos precedieron y nos dictaron con su ejemplo las más puras máximas de patriotrismo y filantropía" (iii). Calcagno cites the positivist tenet that national identity is determined by "the multiple manifestions that the genius of a people assumes in its intellectual and material development" as the organizing principle for the work (iv-v). The entry on Enriqueta "Faver" (272-73) frames her as the negative image of the "Cuban genius." She is first presented as an infamous oddity of provincial history: "Mujer singular por su carácter varonil […]. Se le llamó el Médico-mujer, y es bien conocida su historia en Santiago de Cuba […]" (272).

The negative traits attributed to Faber in Calcagno's dictionary reinforce the themes of the earlier literature that had been published about her case on the island. She is described as a foreign, parasitic element, sacreligious and deceptive, and, in general, mentally and morally defective:

> Nació en Lausana (Suiza) [...] casó con J.B. Renaud, oficial francés, con quien pasó a la guerra de Alemania [...] se fue a París, adoptó desde entonces el traje de hombre [...]. En 1816 vino a la Guadalupe, y se trasladó a Santiago de Cuba [...] pero tres años después pasó a Baracoa y, deseando una compañera que le cuidase y guardase su dinero, concibió la descabellada de casarse *con mujer*, y para el efecto indujo a ello a una joven pobre, del campo llamada Juana de León [...]. Esta sacrílega burla del santo sacramento, apenas consumada, el pretendido cirujano, sin declarar aún su sexo a *su esposa*, vino a La Habana y consiguió hacerse nombrar por el tribunal del Protomedicato, fiscal [...] de la jurisdicción de Baracora. La *esposa* no se conformó, y Enriqueta tuvo que sustraerse a su enojo [...]. (272-73)

In contrast to Fernández, who had interpreted Faber´s marriage to Juana de León as a defensively calculated crime meant to protect her employment –"Con el objeto tal vez de alejar más y más las sospechas, concibió la idea criminal y desgraciada de *casarse*" (60)—, Calcagno explains the marriage as an irrationally overreaching and acquisitive act: "deseando una compañera que le cuidase y guardase su dinero, concibió la descabellada idea de casarse *con mujer*" (93). While Fernández had emphasized Juana's impressionability and innocence in constructing the predatory quality of Faber's "deceit," focusing on the theme of education, Juana is described in Calcagno's biographical dictionary in the simpler terms of a natural resource: "indujo [...] a una

joven pobre, del campo" (93). Faber attempts to steal too much from Cuba, and she is an inept criminal (e.g., "el pretendido cirujano, sin declarar aún su sexo a *su esposa*, vino a La Habana [...]" 93). Calcagno's version of Faber is mockingly dismissive. She was purged from the nation deservedly, and that is the end of her story: "Cumplió esta sentencia, y no se oyó más del Médico-mujer, sino que murió en Florida, tres años después" (94).

Calcagno's novel *Un casamiento misterioso* (1895) expands on his mocking view of Faber. The intrusive narrator remarks on the novelty of her case, distinguishing her from famous women warriors of history like Joan of Arc, Catalina de Erauso, Judith, and Hacette, a trope in the literature about Faber previously mentioned about Fernández's "Causa célebre." He further frames her, though, in the context of a discourse on warfare and national identity, as more bizarre and dishonorable than cowardly, "womanly men":

Casos se han visto en la historia de la humanidad, de hombres que se convirtieron en mujeres, por cobardía o pusilanimidad; casos se han visto de mujeres convertirse en hombres por patriotismo, por valor, y las más de las veces por fanatismos. [P]ero lo que es raro, extraordinario, completamente nuevo y nunca visto, es el hecho de un hombre que ya había llegado a marido, y que se convierte en mujer en el sentido material, materialísimo de la palabra. (124)

The mystery presented in *Un casamiento misterioso* is how a woman might presume that she could in effect appropriate the marital duties of a husband. This source of censorial, *machista* disbelief is metaphorically linked to the idea of a foreigner

usurping Cuban employment and cultural identity. Faber is used as a target for bawdy, phallocentric humor as well as a locus of national anxiety in the novel. For example, the narrator connects a comment on the underdevelopment of the island's medical infrastructure by the colonial Cuban authorities to Faber's putative life of ease and the prolonged sexual frustration that he imagines Juana to have suffered in her marriage to "Enrique":

> ¿Qué había hecho [Faber] durante todo aquel tiempo? Pues nada: distraerse, gozar de la vida y obtener el ya citado cargo público, de subdelegado de Medicina y Cirujía de la jurisdicción de Baracoa; empleo que por conferirse a un extranjero probaba la carencia de facultativos nacionales de que adolecía la comarca. Juana lo aguardaba ansiosa; aquella posición singular de casada-doncella se le había hecho intolerable [...]. (121)

A dialogue between Vives, a military officer, and Calcagno's fictional version of the bishop Espada, thus develops two levels of reaction to Faber's guilty verdict. The military man finds the idea of a marriage between two women, which he also supposed would be necessarily sexually frustrating, very funny, on a grotesquely superficial level. The bishop, on the other hand, ponders the case in religious and nationalistic terms and finds Faber an insidious threat to the fundamental makeup of Cuban "society, religion, and laws":

> *Vives.* –¡Ja, ja, ja!... ¡Un matrimonio sin cónyuge masculino, una boda sin varón, un marido que resulta una hembra, una casada que resulta sin marido!
>
> *Espada.* –Es decir, una mujer que se burla, de la manera más cínica de la sociedad, de la religión y de las leyes; un extranjero que se acoge a nuestro abrigo para befar los sagrados cánones de nuestra madre la Iglesia. (133)

The bishop introduces the key premise that Faber's cross-dressing deceptions were gratuitous: "Y si a lo menos hubiera sido la necesidad de ocultar un pasado bochornoso, si hubiera sido arrastrada al crimen por el hambre, por una coacción irresistible pero no hay tal" (133). Vives suggests that she might be considered "demented" and require imprisonment ("¿Y no sería lo mejor, padre, considerar demente a esa mujer y encerrarla en la quinta?" 134). The two representatives of national authority –the enforcers of human and divine law—deliberate further, returning to the topic of the seeming absurdity of "unisexual matrimony."

> ¿[Q]ué objeto, padre, pudo llevar ese matrimonio unisexual? A eso no encuentro solución.
>
> –Ni yo tampoco; pero, pues el hecho redunda en daño de tercero, enciérrese a esa loca [...]. (137)

Unlike Calcagno's dictionary entry, in which he asserts that Faber died in Florida three years after her deportation from Cuba, *Un casamiento misterioso* ends with a skeptical summary of Fernández's version of her conversion and life as a nun in Veracruz

and New Orleans (141). The closest thing to a happy ending in, however, is the news the Juana de León married a second time, two years after the dissolution of her marriage to Faber ("por su [...] patente falsedad," 141) and was finally able to fulfill her reproductive destiny: "dejó hijos que viven aún en la misma Baracoa y cuyos nombres no tenemos para dar al público" (141).

4.5 "Éste, que ves, engaño colorido": Specular Transvestitism in *Mujer*

By way of synthesis, the documentation about Faber, as cited in the bibliography provided in *Mujer en traje de batalla,* construes her case as uniquely Cuban, at the same time that much of the writing frames her as a parasitic foreign element. This documentation is centered on the trial in Santiago de Cuba. The texts that additionally address her itinerant, international career, before arriving in Cuba and after her expulsion (Fernández, Vázquez, and Calcagno), do so in ways that reinforce ontological and ontogenetic discourses of Cuban nationality. Works by Cuban exile writers in the United States (Calcagno and Marrero) rely substantially on Cuban sources and use Faber's case to obliquely comment on Cuban political and social problems. Modes of historical and fiction writing are mixed up in the multiple levels of documentation from the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century. The primary source documents that do exist – e.g., Juana de León's criminal complaint—are rhetorical in nature. Such is the archive by which Enriqueta Faber is to be defined from the moment of her departure on the schooner

Collector (14-15, 506-08). The only items she carries on board are three articles of clothing and the Cuban passport identifying her as a criminal convict:

> No tenía siquiera una moneda. Por equipaje llevaba una camisa de dormir, un par de medias y un segundo hábito de monja. [....] A las cinco vino por mí el nuevo administrador, un clérigo oficioso y cargado de espaldas. En lugar de los buenos días, me dijo casi con rabia: "No creas que eres libre. Viajas con pasaporte de convicta. [....]" (*Mujer* 506-07)

At this point, Henriette remembers a painting that she had acquired by the side of a road between Moscow and Smolensk while she had been traveling as a surgeon for Bonaparte's army in 1812 (297-300). The episode appears in the "Nadezhda" section. After Henriette had been critically injured during an ambush by Kossack grenadiers, she had lost consciousness and possession of the painting. Once she had been revived in a hospital in Smolensk, Henriette met the previously-mentioned nurse Ivánovna Nadezhda, who cared for her, who reminded her of the eponymously-titled painting, *Mujer en traje de batalla:*

> –¿Por qué me miraste de esa extraña manera [...] esta mañana? ¿Te recuerdo a alguien?
>
> –Te pareces a la mujer de mi cuadro. Es una mujer con chacó de oficial. Pero la he perdido. [....] Apreciaba mucho esa pintura. Me gustaba el título que el pintor le había dado.

> –*Mujer en traje de batalla*—susurró ella. Me dio un escalofrío. Sentí mis vellos erizarse. [....] (325)

Henriette had found the painting shortly after a scene in which her military unit had discovered a sort of transnational archive in a house near the Kremlin. They had found a record of purchases, "written in perfect French" ("la banal e inconclusa lista de compras, escrita en perfecto francés, olvidada sobre el escritorio" 285), as well as a variegated inventory of products that had been collected from around Europe, Asia, and the Caribbean: "porcelana de Sèvres y labrado cristal de Bohemia [...] obras de Voltaire, Rousseau y Raynal, [...] una historia de rusia de Clerc y Levesque [...] [vinos] tintos de Burdeos y de la Borgoña, espumantes del Don y del Rin, *tokay* del Danubio, blancos del Mosa y el Mosela, oportos y jereces, incluso una torre de cajas de champán junto a barriles de cerveza de Praga y toneletes de vodka, coñac y ron [...]" (285). The random logic of individual acquisition implied in the scene of the Moscow occupation was reiterated when Henriette rescued *Mujer en traje de batalla* from a "deluxe collection of garbage" abandoned by the side of the road:

> La vi a un lado del camino. Estaba sobre un abollado samovar de plata y una alfombra oriental enrollada. Había caído boca arriba, y mientras el coche pasaba junto a ella sentí crecer en mí el deseo de tenerla. [...][S]alté a tierra y la rescaté de aquel basurero de lujo. –¿Qué haces?—gritó Petit desde el pescante—. [....] –Lo último que necesitamos es una pintura—refunfuñó. (296)

She had immediately identified strongly with the painting, which was a portrait of a Russian woman dressed in military garb "similar to that of the Prussians." It was a life-size and life-like painting of a bust and head, but its vibrancy has been dulled by the application of a preservative lacquer, a modification she identified as suiting the national taste:

> Era, en fin, una bella mujer de mi edad. Vestía una chaqueta roja con el cuello guarnecido de piel de oso. Llevaba un chacó negro, semejante al de los prusianos, aunque con una escarapela de colores inverosímiles, seguramente imaginados por el pintor –naranja, verde y morado [...]. [....] El artista la había tomado solamente de busto, al tamaño natural, pero su cuerpo se adivinaba esbelto y bien proporcionado. El marco había sido acabado con laca china –no infrecuente en el gusto ruso—, apagando un tanto el rojo de la chaqueta y el profuso colorido de la insignia. En la esquina derecha del lienzo había escrita una breve leyenda en caracteres cirílicos, incomprensibles para mí. (299)

She had been mystified by her compulsive attraction to the portrait but felt a strong intuition that, first, it represented a sort of double for her, as a woman dressed as a male soldier and, perhaps, also on account of the "cultural transvestitism" constituted by the Russian model wearing the jacket of a Prussian soldier. Second, she intuited that her "destiny" would be in some way tied to the fate of the painting: "[T]enía la impresión de que aquella pintura había sido mía, aunque sólo fuera en sueños; algo entrañable que me

había pertenecido, que había perdido sin saberlo y ahora regresaba para anunciarme que su destino marcharía junto al mía" (299-300). In the hospital in Smolensk with Nadezhda, she is able to account for a large part of the painting's "strange attraction" for her.

First, Henriette's authenticity as a character that is aware of and open to her bisexuality is established with Nadezhda. At the age of fourteen, she had been "surprised," "perplexed," and "displeased" when she had found out that Claudette Despaigne and Françoise, another actress in Maryse's Théâtre Nomade, were a romantic couple:

> Lo que más me sorprendió fue la relación amorosa que ahora existía entre Claudette y Françoise. "Ocurrió sin darnos cuenta", dijo Françoise lacónicamente. "En Linz", añadió Claudette con timidez. Perpleja, miré a Maryse en busca de alguna explicación, pero se limitó a sonreír y a encogerse de hombros. "¿Y Pierre?", pregunté para ocultar mi desagrado. (96)

At the University of Paris, she and Fauriel had hesitantly admitted to their attraction for one another one night toward the end of a masquerade ball, but they were interrupted, abandoned the subject, and were soon permanently separated:

> –[C]uando ["dos alegres centuriones"] me acariciaban bajo la mesa deseé que fuera tu mano la que sentía […]. Eso jamás se me habría ocurrido de no estar enmascarada […].

–[….] Yo también te he deseado. Ven… Acércate más.

–Mesdames –gritó Pierre desde el pescante […].

–Tanto mejor—dijo Fauriel malhumorada, deshaciendo su abrazo. (275-76)

It is in Smolensk, however, after the brief love affair that she shares with Nadezhda (323-30), that Henriette experiences her epiphany of self-realization. As a bisexual woman, survivor of wars and misfortunes, and itinerant medical doctor, Faber leaves the encounter with the sense that she is a secure, whole, and fulfilled person: "ya confortada, consolada, mimada y amamantada; ya integrada y completa" (330). The painting stands as an image of this realization as well as for Henriette and Nadezhda's transitory but defining relationship: "[L]a mujer de la pintura sería el símbolo que uniría mi doble aspecto, Ella y Yo, Yo y Ella por siempre" (329).

Second, Henriette's premonition of a shared fate with the painting prefigures the unfortunate events that unfold in the last two sections of the novel. The disastrous reversals of fortune in France, Switzerland, and Cuba ruin her plans for reuniting with Nadezhda in Paris and founding a school for women on the Cavent family estate in Foix. When Faber revises her will after having returned from Russia to France, she leaves Nadezhda her house on Rue Saint-Honoré, where she has not coincidentally hung *Mujer en traje de batalla* ("Le ruego que investigue su paradero y le communiqué que siempre estará a su disposición," 364). In the event of her death, her instructions are for the painting to be moved to the "château" in Foix, which she stipulates is to remain a school

for “daughters of disabled veterans,” under the administration of “a capable woman” (364).

During her deportation from Cuba, then, Henriette experiences a moment of anxiety about the whereabouts of the artwork (“[a]dónde habría ido a parar,” 507). It is the third place in the novel in which the painting is connected to Henriette’s fate, in light of the archival principle of provenance (the record of an object’s origin and ownership). The painting is defined by its provenance gap and Henriette’s projection of her own image and history in it. Henriette, and the implied reader, only know that it had been abandoned by the side of the road between Moscow and Smolensk, during the time of Bonaparte’s 1812 Russian campaign (297). Henriette had noticed *Mujer* during chance circumstances, and she had acquired it arbitrarily: she salvaged it without having recognized the work and without consideration for its potential monetary value (“Si su dueño la tiró es porque carece de valor,” 297). She describes only the sense of having been uniquely “attracted”:

> No era la primera vez que me sentía atraída por un objeto, digamos el reloj de cuco que había comprado en Munich, determinado sombrero o, sin ir más lejos, el chal de cachemira que, pese a su olor a arenque, adquiriera en Moscú para sustitur la desgarrada banda con que me apretaba los senos. Pero ahora era diferente; muy diferente: tenía la impresión de que aquella pintura había sido mía, algo entrañable que me había pertenecido, que

había perdido sin saberlo y ahora regresaba para anunciarme que su destino marcharía junto al mío. (299-300)

The principle of attraction underlying Henriette's acquisition of *Mujer en traje de batalla* is related to Benítez Rojo's application of chaos mathematics in *La isla que se repite,* as previously mentioned about the critical apparatus presented in the appendix "Noticia bibliográfica sobre Caos" (*La isla* 305-12).

When Henriette unlawfully appropriates *Mujer* outside of Moscow (297), when she loses it and Nadezhda re-purchases it for her in Smolensk (325), and when she takes it to Paris (364, 413), Havana (433), and Baracoa (466), her erratic itinerary is defined by a dense complex of turbulent personal, political, social, and economic forces. These forces are acted on by interconnected crosscurrents of trans-Atlantic, trans-Caribbean, trans-European and Asian historicities of imperialistic war and revolution. At an extradiagetic level, the strange attractors that may be observed in Henriette's circuitous travels with the painting, and her ultimate loss of possession, are constituted by reiterative patterns of autosimilarity.

Because the novel is framed as a memoir written by Faber in 1870, there are two temporal frames, and two narrative modes, within which Henriette's appropriation of *Mujer* is portrayed. The first moment is limited to the period between 1812, when she acquires it, and 1823, when she must leave it in Baracoa. The approach that Henriette adopts in her twenties and early thirties toward *Mujer* is fundamentally geared toward establishing a stable identity through the manipulation of archival materials, as is her

reified interpretation of Nadezhda, with whom she strongly associates the work: "Y la mujer de la pintura sería el símbolo que uniría mi doble aspecto, Ella y Yo, Yo y Ella por siempre" (329).

A series of questions is suggested by the framing narrator's, i.e., the elderly Faber's, descriptions. When and where did the painting originate? Who was the woman in the portrait? For example, the narrator makes reference to the work's professional but domestic quality, which she associates with aristocratic family portraits, "esos retratos que cuelgan en los palacio y castillos junto a apacibles ancianas con cofías blancas, rígidos prelados y rubicundos militares cuajados de condecoraciones" (299). The younger Henriette is conspicuously indifferent toward finding out about the provenance of the painting, about the woman whom it represents, or Nadezhda. To cite another example, when Henriette first identifies Nadezhda with *Mujer,* the nurse gives her own name, tells Henriette that she is from "very far away," seeming to prepare to narrate her story of origin, and asserts difference from the woman in the portrait: "Soy Nadezhda Ivánova. Vengo de muy lejos. Nada tengo que ver con la mujer de tu cuadro […]" (325). However, when Nadezhda additionally informs Henriette that "[t]u pintura la están vendiendo en la plaza, aquí mismo, frente al hospital," it is the only matter that interests Faber, until they initiate a physical relationship (326-27). While Henriette's Nadezhda-*Mujer* moment is climactic in her coming-of-age narrative, the elderly narrator expresses curiosity and some regret over not having found out more about them (28, 506).

An analogous correlation is developed between the unlawful appropriation of the artwork by Henriette in her twenties, who archives the *Mujer* portrait within her own coming-of-age narrative, and the Cuban documentary appropriation of Enriqueta Faber, with regard to the formation of what Marrero calls "la identificación de un pueblo unido, en marcha hacia la constitución de una nacionalidad" (1:xii). The connection is first presented as she loads the painting into the coach that transports her military unit. She performs Cuban identity as "Enrique Fuenmayor" by means of language when she argues with fellow soldier Antoine Petit:

> –Lo último que necesitamos es una pintura—refunfuñó. [....]
>
> –Ayer recogiste una caja llena de novelas indecentes.
>
> –Es cierto, pero no las llevaré conmigo. En cuanto las lea las tiraré. No es exactamente tu caso.
>
> –¡Vete al carajo!
>
> –¡Si me vuelves a hablar en español te retiro la palabra! (297)

Most of the other mentions of *Mujer* in the novel are similarly linked to the construction of Faber as Cuban. For example, Henriette is complimented for speaking excellent French for a native of Havana just before showing a traveling Parisian opera singer named Madame Fusil the painting's title in Cyrillic (304). At the beginning of the "Christopher" section, after Henriette's return to Paris, there are two consecutive scenes in which lawyers prepare archival documents for her. In the first scene, she has Monsieur

Dubreuil file for French citizenship for Cuban-born Enrique Fuenmayor, "un *alter ego* que ya sentía mío" (356), along with part of her patrimony of family jewels as a tariff to expedite the process. Her double identity is made legally official (358). In the second scene, Joseph Lebrun prepares the will for her that documents the connection between Nadezhda, *Mujer,* and Henriette's self-identification as a Franco-Swiss feminist (360-64). Finally, she unpacks the painting in Havana, finding that the woman in the portrait "[p]arecía muy conforme de estar allí" (433), and has it reframed upon establishing her office in Baracoa (466).

In sum, the younger Henriette projects her own identity onto the dislocated icons of the *Mujer* painting and Nadezhda, both of whom she takes legal measures to ultimately archive on her properties in Switzerland and Paris. The elderly Faber, as implied author of *Mujer en traje de batalla*, by contrast, constructs a chaotic memoir organized according to the principle of strange attraction in personal encounters and archival provenance. The text performs dissonances between not only the Cuban documentation of Enriqueta Faber and the elderly Henriette's trans-European, trans-Atlantic, and trans-Caribbean version, but between the views of archival processes by which she operated as a young woman and those she develops toward the end of her life. Her project as a writer from one of the archetypal sites of Cuban exile literary production, late nineteenth-century New York City, is begun to re-archive her own image, in the memoir framed by the novel *Mujer en traje de batalla,* in order to escape her Cuban documentary fate. Like the version of herself whose life she narrates between the ages of fifteen and thirty-six

years old, the octogenarian Henriette Faber is a dynamic, contradictory, and developed character.

4.6 "Caos se ha visto en la historia de la humanidad": Henriette Faber-Cavent's Memoir

Henriette writes the memoir of her own putatively Cuban history from New York City in 1870, as previously mentioned. The time frame and place are charged with the history of late-nineteenth-century political organization among U.S. Cuban émigré communities leading up to the 1895 Cuban war of independence, as well as the period of prolific literary production by Cuban writers in New York like Villaverde, Morúa, and Martí. The consolidation of the pro-independence organization of the 1880s and 1890s was preceded, at the same time, by an period of complex and varied migrations "for economic, educational, and political reasons" and an uneven "transition from an annexationist, diplomatically oriented cause that did not threaten slavery, to an insurgent, self-determinist, and openly abolitionist movement" (Poyo 487).

The historian Gerald Poyo indicates that the period of the Ten Years' War (1868-78) in the U.S. Cuban émigré communities was characterized by class, racial, and political factionalization (496-503), a situation that critically impeded support for the rebellion in western Cuba (496). He identifies the pro-slavery, annexationist *junta* of New York City, the first Cuban exile political organization to be established in the United

States (1848-1855), as the main obstructionist element against the independence effort (496-503). The New York *junta,* which operated on funds that had been provided by the annexationist Club de la Habana, and in concert with creole planter class interests (489-90), was only first challenged by an abolitionist separatist group from New Orleans in 1869, in the newspaper *La libertad* (498). In 1870, the first Cuban émigré independence organization in New York to oppose slavery, the Sociedad de Artesanos Cubanos de New York, was established "to counteract the junta's influence in the communities. [....] The society even demanded political segregation between independents and annexationists" (Poyo 498).

As explored previously, Calcagno's *Diccionario biográfico cubano*, published in the context of counterrevolutionary conclusion to the Ten Years' War in 1878, proposed to codify the economic interests of the creole planter class as the moral values that should define the Cuban nation (iii-v). It downgrades the significance of military action in Cuban history, as opposed to in European history, in favor of "intellectual and material development" (iv-v) that is heavily skewed toward Cuban creole intellectuals with vested interests in the system of the sugar plantation. For example, the nine-page encomiastic entry on "Francisco de Arango y Parreño" (49-58) makes "José Antonio Maceo" seem to be a diminutive figure by comparison. Calcagno condenses the name of José Antonio de la Caridad Maceo y Grajales and reduces his biographical definition to racial "otherness" ("Santiago de Cuba, 1849: de la raza de color" 897) and an abridged list of battles (897-98).

The dictionary, listed in the bibliographic apparatus of *Mujer en traje de batalla* (510), thus also serves to contextualize Henriette's project as a memoirist. As of 1878 in the New York Cuban émigré communities, the Partido Revolucionario Cubano and the foundational intellectual work of José Martí, in dialogue with that of Maceo, were still over a decade in the future. Calcagno writes about Martí: "Abogado, escritor, poeta; al estallar las revueltas políticas, logró escapar de los trabajos públicos á que lo condenaron [...]. [D]io en N. York *El Ismaelillo,* pequeño poema. [....][E]s diligente é instruido y es lástima que guste del estilo ampuloso que á menudo lo hace incomprensible" (405).

By all accounts presented in the novel, Henriette remains aloof of the activities of Cubans in New York. Because of this, her preparation of the *Mujer en traje de batalla* manuscript represents a framing case of strange attraction. Her writing coincides with the foundation of the Sociedad de Artesanos Cubanos de New York, in opposition to the New York *junta*'s conservative national project, which is to protect the political and economic interests of Cuba's planter class. Like Henriette, the abolitionist, pro-independence movement arrived in New York by way of New Orleans (Poyo 498). Henriette is not a nationalist and definitely not a Cuban nationalist. However, her memoir is framed as a chance precursor to late-twentieth and early-twenty-first-century gendered Caribbean discourses on migration and culture contact.

In *Travestismos culturales,* Jossianna Arroyo identifies a gender-blending discourse underlying Martí's anti-racist rhetoric in the essay when he defines Latin American and Caribbean otherness in terms of the organic body of the mother-country,

which, Arroyo affirms, is both feminine and racially mixed (14). The feminine quality of permeability between racial categories serves to simultaneously reinforce a masculine rhetoric of moral strength and unity, as well as to distinguish "Our America" from the "razas de librería" and "pensadores de lámpara" derived from French Enlightenment epistemology:

> Ya en el siglo XIX, Martí define una otredad que se verá como femenina o feminizada, inaugurando, así, un modelo de representación de la "mezcla racial" y la "hibridez cultural" latinoamericana, fundando un discurso de la unidad frente a la diferencia, y demostrando que los racismos dividen. [....] [...] Martí define el pensamiento americano respecto al problema racial por oposición al de los "pensadores de lámpara" y "las razas de librería" del Iluminismo europeo. La universalidad del pensamiento Occidental ha excluido a las razas y a las culturas mixtas de su esquema. Por consiguiente, Martí cree necesario elaborar un discurso de lo latinoamericano en el que se incluya una posición sobre las razas y, al mismo tiempo, se cree una "diferencia" que defina "lo nuestro." (14)

The genealogy that Henriette anachronistically prefigures additionally encompasses Ortiz's theory of transculturation, emphasizing the exogenous "roots and routes" of Caribbean culture (Deloughrey), Benítez Rojo's *La isla,* and the concept of transnational creolization developed by the novelist and Caribbeanist from Guadeloupe Maryse Condé (b. 1930). Condé, like Benítez Rojo, defines the Caribbean as a cultural

area whose distinctive features are, first, undefined "contours" or borders, second, a porous influx and outflux of cultural influences, and, third, dynamic tension between incongruously coexisting transcultural elements ("Un lieu sans contour defines, poreux à tous les bruits lointains, traversé par toutes les influences, mêmes les plus contradictoires, " 309). Unlike Benítez Rojo, until the late 1990s and early 2000s, Condé identifies the nationalist construct of *créolité* –a Francophone Caribbean postcolonial approach to language usage, advocating the use of créole by Caribbean writers, rather than French, to represent the authentic cultures of Guadeloupe and Martinique—as phallogonic: "Le métissage a toujours été la terreur des societies constituées qui veulent protéger le ventre de leur femmes contre le sperme des mâles étrangers et par conséquent contre le changement" (309). Around the time of the publication of *Mujer en traje de batalla,* Benítez Rojo began to incorporate gender in his theoretical schema linking racism, nationalism, and cultural homogenization with the sugar plantation economy, following Ortiz, e.g., "Cuban power is plantation power, that is, macho power, racist power" ("Carnival" 25). *Mujer* stages an archival fiction, in the form of Henriette's memoir, that narrates trans-European, trans-Atlantic, and trans-Caribbean patterns of recurrence, as, simultaneously, a reiteration of the painting *Mujer* and a prefiguration of such a Latin American and Caribbean discursive genealogy.

Henriette's New York is a transcultured site of migration, rather than a place of exile, as in Condé's model of urban dislocation (309-10). On a personal level, she is accompanied by her secretary and travel partner Milly, is a devoted reader of the *New*

York Herald, which a young Irishman delivers to her apartment, and habitually enjoys tea, Northern-European-style peasant bread ("pan de centeno"), and an ounce of white rum for breakfast (25-26). Her apartment overlooks a bustling street, which she likes to hear and watch as she writes (26). The city is not a politically-neutral site, however. She relates New York both to the imperialistic triumphalism of Bonaparte's army and to conditions of displacement, exploitation, hunger, and violence that she has experienced and witnessed in war (26). Rather than convey a sense of alienation, loss, or nostalgia about her situation, she expresses that she feels in her element in the city, not only for the way it reminds her of having been immersed among "masses of immigrants, energy and hunger, trains, strange kinds of music and fury" in the multinational Grand Armée ("Pues no hay ciudad sobre la tierra que se parezca tanto como ésta a lo que fue la Grand Armée de Napoleón, ejército de ejércitos, legión de naciones," 26) but especially for the fast-paced, strong rhythm of everyday life:

> Esta ciudad me viene como anillo al dedo. Lo supe desde el primer día. Es aquí –donde se vive el momento, se corre al galope y se odia y se ama con la pasión del soldado—que hablaré de las horribles heridas que deja la guerra: escombros ennegrecidos, vastas tumbas anónimas, viudas y huérfanos, cojos y ciegos, pero también mutilaciones del alma. Y sin embargo, la vida de campaña –como [...] esta bullente ciudad—tiene su lado hermoso, su propia poesía [...]. (26-27)

It is further established that the elderly Henriette has continued to lead a life of travel (199), adventure, romance, and learning in the interim of the forty-three years that have passed since she was embarked on *Collector:*

> [N]i siquiera pude hablar de aquellas extrañas noches de vodú en Nueva Orleans, ni de mi productiva asociación con Marie Laveau, ni cómo fue que conocí a mi tercer marido, ni de mi clandestino regreso a La Habana, [...] se perderán en el silencio los días de Irlanda y Egipto, [...] mis últimas noches de amor en la casa encantada de Venecia. (507-08)

The dense narrative of her intimate history, which is in dialogue with the gendered Caribbean discourses of culture contact and transcultured historicities by staging the "contamination" of European cultural roots during the Enlightenment, thus performs a rhetoric of organic authenticity, legitimized by the experience of old age. In contrast to Martí's image of the autochthonous and telluric as the locus of "otredad [...] femenina o feminizada" (Arroyo 14), Henriette's memoir is founded on images of travel and particularly, like *La isla,* develops metaphors of the sea –archipelagos, maritime routes, and the turbulence of tides— to account for vital transcultural and trans-historical processes. Territory is an illusory trap in *Mujer*, a problem that we will examine in the memoir's portrayal of Baracoa, the nuanced sublot regarding the trans-Atlantic and trans-Caribbean history of revolution, counterrevolution, and emigration centered on the independence of Haiti, and the fate of Henriette's properties in Foix and Paris.

4.7 Oceanic Textualities of Maryse Polidor: Improvisation/Supersyncretism as a Poetics of Survival and Trans-Caribbean Plantation History

The first indication of how Henriette writes, from the space of her putative exile, against the Cuban history of Enriqueta Faber –which, again, focuses on her medical practice and marriage to Juana de León in Baracoa, the criminal trial in Santiago, and punishment in Havana—is manifest in the structure of the novel. As previously introduced, of the five-hundred-ten-page work, "Juanita" is the last section and consists of seventy-five pages (423-508). The first forty pages of that section (423-63) are taken up by the denouement of the narrative arc chronicling the friendship between Henriette and Maryse (13-463). The next four pages (464-68) develop a contrast between the vitality of Baracoa's coast, connected to the rest of the Caribbean by the maritime routes converging on the Windward Passage between the eastern coast of Cuba and Haiti, and inland Baracoa as a stagnant town. The last thirteen pages present, first, Henriette's apocryphal reflections on her confinement and losses as she prepares for deportation, and, second, the concluding thoughts of the octogenarian Faber (495-508). The moment related to Juana de León, then, by which the Cuban legend of Faber is defined, is marginalized to twenty-seven pages near the end, but not concluding, the novel's final section (469-95).

As the elderly Henriette indicates early in the novel, Maryse Polidor is the central character in both her life and memoir (33). She serves multiple purposes in the text.

First, she fulfills the role of moral educator and mentor for Henriette, contradicting the nineteenth-century view of a woman's need for male tutelage and correct education to become mothers, which serves as an important trope by which her nineteenth-century Cuban detractors account for Faber's mental and moral defectiveness (Calcagno, *Un casamiento* 133-37; Fernández de Cuevas 55-66; Vázquez 111-20), as explored above. Henriette affirms that Maryse's authentic but relativist system of moral values has influenced her upon her friend's departure to Cuba:

> [T]e reirás al saber que lo que tú llamas falta de firmeza es para mí tu mayor virtud. Nada más fácil decir que sí o que no a las cosas argumentando principios inconmovibles. [….] Naturalmente, no le hago cargos a tía Margot. Para mí fue una verdadera madre y llevo su retrato sobre mi corazón. [….] Pero no me ciego. Lo que ella llamaba sus principios eran simplemente las reglas que mi abuelo le había inculcado, los deseos de una clase y de una época. [….] Como me dijiste una vez, por exigente que sea la situación en que te coloca la vida, siempre tratas de ofrecer tu mejor actuación. (191-92)

The moral lessons that Henriette takes from her friendship coming of age under Maryse's protection are related to the attribution of two sets of textualities, related to Benítez Rojo's *La isla*, to the narrative purview of her character. Maryse represents the nexus between the two facets of Benítez Rojo's theory of the Caribbean that serve as

strange attractors in Henriette's turbulent career. The first is the principle of improvisational performance as a poetics of survival.

This aspect of *La isla* was criticized as a disingenuous appropriation of Ortiz's theory in order to apply a frame of Eurocentric postmodernism to Caribbean and Latin American cultural processes (Spitta 170). Benítez Rojo's deconstruction of the "fuga caótica de significantes" implied by each facet of the patron saint of Cuba, La Virgen de la Caridad de Cobre (who is related syncretically to the Yoruba orisha Ochún, the indigenous Taíno deity Atabex, and the Spanish Virgen de Illescas), was viewed as especially offensive and taken as a sign of émigré overcompensation:

> […] Benítez Rojo constructs an ever-vanishing Caribbean, a nostalgic mirage of everything that the United States is not and can never be for a Cuban academic living here, now. [….] With migration to the United States, the Caribbean is lost for the enunciating "I" of *La isla que se repite.* It is reconstructed as an ever-vanishing and elusive entity, forever the object of yearning and desire, forever the repository of all that is experienced as absent and lacking in the "here" of the enunciation. (Spitta 171)

In *Mujer,* the related concepts of polyrhythmic transcultural improvisational performance and supersyncretism, which became points of controversy when interpreted as a portrayal of Caribbean culture in reifying Eurocentric or nostalgic Cuban exile terms, are applied to Maryse's European form of traveling, improvised theater.

Maryse's Théâtre Nomade, as previously mentioned in the synopsis of the novel, is a theater troupe of her own invention that travels along with Bonaparte's army, adding performers from diverse backgrounds and nationalities as the army marches through northern Europe. According to Maryse, the idea originated when she dressed Henriette like a Turkish Mameluke so that she could visit her husband Robert in the front ranks of the light cavalry without being harassed (64-66, 99). The actual troupe began with a group of women traveling with Maryse who had had some sort of experience in theater and gradually picked up a heterogenous cast that came to include the young Jewish clarinetist from Strasbourg, Maurice Larose, the Pinelli Brothers and Venetian mimes, who joined in Salzburg, Frau Müller and her performing dogs in Mannheim, and Professor Kosti and his mathematically gifted horse Pythagoras, in Frankfurt (100). The first complete description of a performance by the Théâtre places the variety show within early variations of what would come to be classified and normalized by Carlo Goldoni as Commedia Dell'Arte (97-98). The connection is signaled by the reference to the stock characters of "Arlequín, Pantalón y Pulchinela" acting out a bawdy pantomime of a situation of cuckoldry titled "La caza del unicornio." The dissonant addition of the character Pierrot, a tame, stylized variation of the trickster comedian character Arlecchino, who appeared in the rococo, eighteenth-century French adaptation of the Comédie Italienne ("a mute, romantic, desexualized, bloodless, solitary *Pierrot*," Fava 43), clashes with the wild Arlequín, who in the scene mounts "una cornuda y rolliza Colombina […] en medio de coces y remeneos de grupa" (97). The doubling, together with the heterogeneous and improvised physicality of the rest of the performance –e.g., a

pantomime dance of a cat by Maryse, a magic show, an acrobatic performance, and the mysterious young mulatto woman from Saint-Domingue, Claudette, performing the dance of the seven veils—hints at the diverse, transnational "supersyncretic" Renaissance origins of the Commedia Dell'Arte before it was named and codified (Smith 1-13). The incorporation of actors from different regions of what would eventually become Italy during the travels of the Renaissance version of the theater influenced its multilingualism, emphasis on physical expression rather than dialogue, and "anti-provincial" aesthetic:

> Multilingualism is born in Commedia […] as a necessity; it develops as a genuine explosion of the word, a word that is inherently gestural and perfectly at home in the physical gestuality of its characters and actions. Multilingualism confirms and affirms the nomadism of the Commedia companies, which gather and disseminate information of all kinds, as they bring together artists who are constitutionally anti-provincial and who "de-provincialize" their audiences. (Fava 148)

Finally, the discipline of improvisation in Commedia is related to a poetics of survival on stage and within the improvised narratives:

> It is evident that the concept of survival does not involve only the character, but also the character's interpreter. They share the terrible responsibility of always finding a solution to the problem, the problems, the exponentially multiplying problems, at that instant, in the very moment when they manifest themselves. They both must survive the threats of the

> Capitano and the distraction of the audience, atavistic hunger and incomprehension of the critics […], and the fear of having to make everyone laugh more and more all the time. (Fava 77)

Henriette's knack for multilingual and physical improvisation and talent for performance and costuming, on the basis of her need to survive, are accounted for by her coming of age in the environment of the Théâtre Nomade. Facets of the experience are reiterated throughout her life story, in ways that dramatically affect her fate. The most influential example for Henriette is her medical treatment of Maryse and Claudette Despaigne, after the former is seriously injured and the latter killed in an explosion of the Théâtre's pyrotechnic effects (187-89). Her role as medical assistant in that case is the origin of her sense of vocation to become a doctor (189), which leads to her day-to-day improvised cross-dressing performance as the "Habanero" Enrique Fuenmayor y Cavent at the University of Paris medical school (215-77) –for which Maryse provides her "scenarios" in the form of cultural information on Havana (219)—her experimental flirtation with fellow "passing woman" Raymond Fauriel under the "influence" of a mask (275), and so on, through the real-life reiteration of the female cuckholding scene of "La caza del unicornio" with Juana and Chicoy (484). Finally, she is able to escape her documentary fate aboard *The Collector* by trading "parts," costumes, and documents of identification with the prostitute Madeleine Dampierre (20).

It is worth observing that other members of the Théâtre Nomade applied their specialized improvisational skills to offstage survival, as well. For example, Professor

Kosti, a cross between a magician and a pedantic Doctor Gratiano type from the Commedia, proves to be a precursor for Chaos mathematics. He devises a winning system for gambling in the resort town of Baden-Baden, based on calculations of probability (115-18). Not coincidentally, it is during the testing of the system that Maryse meets Julián Robledo, the man with whom she will move to Havana, ultimately leading to Henriette's arrival in Cuba. The sugar plantation owner and "acaudalado español de América" (129) Robledo loses the bet he places according to Kosti's incorrect prediction, but he and Maryse meet again by chance in the city of Kassel and begin their relationship (129). Kosti ultimately quits the Théâtre based on a calculation of the probability of diminishing returns and accidents in the theater (156-57). The other performer whose improvisational skills are required for survival is Claudette. The reader comes to find out that her representation of Salome's dance dates to a childhood of sexual abuse by her father, a plantation owner in Saint-Domingue before the Haitian Revolution (163-68).

The second textuality related to *La isla* in which Maryse is involved, and within the turbulent trans-Caribbean and trans-European forces of which Henriette is consequently subsumed, it the recurrence of the plantation system, as explored in the first chapter of *La isla.* The concept is posited in a more straightforward and specific way in *Mujer* than in *La isla.* It is applied to the concrete transfer of technologies, resources, and émigrés of the planter class of Saint-Domingue to Cuba in 1804, as a result of the Haitian Revolution. The narrative logic by which the trans-Caribbean and trans-Atlantic

textuality of the sugar plantation, revolution, and counterrevolution is established in *Mujer* is relatively simple, as well. During the narrated time of the "Maryse" section, her relationship with Robledo intensifies, and her connection with the Cuban plantation system thereby increases. At the end of the section, she and Robledo move to Havana together, and Maryse, in contrast to her enlightened self-image, becomes a reluctant slaveowner.

During the same journey from Munich to an unidentified city to the east of the Rhine River ("tengo motivos para no dar el nombre de la ciudad" 186), Maryse recounts her turbulent recent past experiences in Haiti as the consort to the wealthy mulatto politician Jean-Charles Portelance (an advisor to Toussaint L'Ouverture) and as mother to his daughter Justine, following the triumph of the Haitian Revolution and the counterrevolution launched by the French generals Charles LeClerc and Donatien-Marie-Joseph de Vimeur, Vicomte de Rochambeau. In a lengthy, intercalated subplot (102-11, 118-26, 152-54, 160-69, 176-79, 182-85), Maryse describes, first, Portelance's political activities in Paris, presumably at the French National Assembly (102). Portelance's activities and his writings in favor of Toussaint L'Ouverture's moderate positions on reform in Saint-Domingue –e.g., the inclusion of the planter classes in reconfiguring the island's agricultural production on the basis of paid labor, and the suppression of race warfare and reprisals—gain him a personal invitation from the then-governor L'Ouverture to become a member of his cabinet on the island (110).

Next, Maryse narrates to Henriette the brief period of reform and reconstruction following the consolidation of the Haitian Revolution under the unitary leadership of L'Ouverture, during which time Portelance is tasked with contributing in the drafting of the first Constitution of Haiti (122). Finally, she recounts the series of catastrophes that had caused her to return to France, by way of Baracoa, Cuba, in 1802. First, Portelance is killed in a shipwreck, while traveling to Philadelphia to settle family business (129). Their daughter Justine is killed a few days later in a rockslide caused by cannon fire from Leclerc's invading ships after Bonaparte has determined to launch a counterrevolutionary expedition against Haiti (154). Maryse accepts work for the Leclerc's household, performing and teaching theater and music, until the 1802 epidemic of yellow fever, which kills Leclerc, followed by the pogrom against black Haitians executed by Leclerc's successor, Rochambeau. Maryse abandons the island, taking with her Claudette Despaigne, the teenaged orphaned mulatto daughter of a planter who had been raping Claudette since she was six years old.

What is especially of interest is how the Haitian Revolution is sourced in this section of *Mujer*. The best indication is given at the novel's two points of greatest metanarrative density, which frame Maryse's Saint-Domingue subplot. At the beginning of her testimony, Maryse first narrates her Caribbean history to Henriette on the road to Karlsruhe and just after the first performance of the Théâtre Nomade. She recounts how Portelance had told her, in Paris, shortly after the French Revolution, about a book that he planned to write about L'Ouverture in the future of Saint-Domingue:

> --Tengo pensado escribir un libro. Podré expresar mis ideas políticas y económicas con toda la extensión que éstas requieran. Pero sobre todo hablaré del general Toussaint Louverture, el único hombre capaz de pacificar y reconstruir Saint-Domingue. Un negro, un antiguo esclavo, pero ha probado ser un excelente militar y un hábil administrador. [….] Más aún, es el único que ha visto la inutilidad de la guerra racial; sabe que sólo con el concurso de blancos, negros y mulatos se podrá restablecer la producción de azúcar y café. (109)

At the end of Maryse's testimony, at the point in which narrates her escape with Claudette from the 1804 outbreak of yellow fever and Rochambeau's pogrom in Le Cap, the elderly Henriette interjects information about a source of information on the same circumstances, *The Horrors of St. Domingo* by Leonora Mary Hassel Sansay:

> Poco después de mi llegada a Nueva York llegó a mis manos un libro que publicaba la interesante correspondencia de una señora norteamericana con Mister Aaron Burr […]. Las cartas habían sido escritas desde el Cabo Francés y daban detalles sobre la plaga […] la muerte de Leclerc y sobre todo de la orgiástica tiranía de Rochambeau […]. [M]e hicieron sospechar, gracias a ciertos indicios, que mis queridas amigas escaparon del Cabo Francés en el mismo barco que las norteamericanas. (185)

The first citation resembles C.L.R. James's presentation in *The Black Jacobins* of L'Ouverture as a uniquely equipped leader of the Haitian Revolution, on the grounds of his experience as a former slave with exceptional military and administrative knowledge:

> He had had exceptional opportunities, and both in mind and body was far beyond the average slave. [….] His post as steward of the livestock had given him experience in administration, authority, and intercourse with those who ran the plantation. [….] He had read Caesar's Commentaries, which had given him some idea of politics and the military art and the connection between them. (91)

One important distinction is that Portelance omits the importance that James assigns L'Ouverture's connection and experience with "the masses" during the revolution itself: "Finally he had had the exceptional experience of the last three years of the revolution in Saint-Domingue. [….] The masses of the people learn much during a revolution, far more a man like Toussaint" (91). Portelance's analysis instead substitutes praise for L'Ouverture's moderate, incrementalist views toward agricultural reform and amnesty for the planter class in Saint-Domingue. James describes this ideal, which would become L'Ouverture's Achilles' heel, together with L'Ouverture's neglect of the revolutionary, majority black population, according to the analysis of *The Black Jacobins* (285-88):

> The ultimate guarantee of freedom was the prosperity of agriculture. This was Toussaint's slogan. [….] He would not allow the old estates to be broken up, but bound the interests of the labourers to their work by giving

> them their keep and a fourth of the produce. [….] He confined the blacks to the plantations under rigid penalties. He was battling with the colossal task of transforming a slave population, after years of licence, into a community of free labourers, and he was doing it in the only way he could see. (242)

Second, Portelance's activities in Paris, to which Mirabeau's name and the Friends of the Negro are linked (102), may be compared with James's analysis of the futility of the attempts by mulattoes from Saint-Domingue to influence the French National Assembly in order to gain political power through citizenship, suffrage, and representation (70-71). James cites the early-1788 gambit of Mirabeau to secure representation of mulattoes on the National Assembly as an unwitting root cause of the Haitian revolution (60-61). The planters of the Club Massiac influenced the Assembly to deny the legal existence of "colonists of color" except as property (71-72):

> The Mulattoes, wishing to wear the royalist white cockade, were prohibited by the triumphant bureaucrats. Rejected in France, humiliated at home, the Mulattoes organized a revolt. It was the quarrel between bourgeoisie and monarchy that brought the Paris masses on the political stage. It was the quarrel between whites and Mulattoes that woke the sleeping slaves. (73)

The period of renewal described by Maryse on her and Portelance's arrival in the Cap Français in 1801 (118-20) likewise resembles James's description of L'Ouverture's

seeming vindication for promoting amnesty for former slave owners and an agricultural policy of continuity. Maryse describes industrious "carpinteros y albañiles" working on numerous construction projects (119), a general atmosphere of racial integration (119-20), and a thriving cultural environment, in which she gives lessons in musical and dramatic performance and forms a theatrical troupe, all while "los plantadores regresaban del exilio y la producción y el comercio mejoraban en la sucesión de los días" (120). James writes:

> Personal industry, social morality, public education, religious toleration, free trade, civic pride, racial equality, this ex-slave strove according to his lights to lay their foundations in the new State. [….] Cultivation prospered, and the new Saint-Domingue began to shape itself with astonishing quickness. At Le Cap was built a hotel […] of a style which would compare with the finest that existed in any part of the world. [….] Race prejudice […] was vanishing fast. [….] Travellers who saw Le Cap during that wonderful year agreed that a new spirit was in the country. The theatres began to play again, and some of the Negro players showed a remarkable talent. [….] [T]he success of Toussaint's administration can be judged by the fact that in a year and a half he had resotred cultivation to two-thirds of what it had been in the most flourishing days of the old regime. (247-48)

The detail of Maryse's narrative regarding the manner of Justine's death in a rockslide seems to serve as a marker confirming the close correspondence between her eyewitness version of Leclerc's and finally Rochambeau's attempted counterrevolution in Saint-Domingue and James's noted history: "[S]u memoria no habría de guardar el atronador estallido del polvorín, ni el alúd de rocas que la explosión ocasionara, ni el grito de Juistine cuando rodaba hacia la muerte montaña abajo" (154). In James we read about Leclerc's 2 February 1802 assault on Le Cap: "Suddenly with a terrific shock the powder-magazine exploded. Rocks loosened by the explosion came rolling down, crushing women and children hiding in the hills" (296).

In *Mujer*, L'Ouverture is posited to have committed critical errors in following Portelance's advice to restore the counterrevolutionary planter class in a bid to reform the means of agricultural production in a conciliatory and incremental way (*Mujer* 120, James 242, 261) and, at the same time, entrusting the project of a Constitution to Portelance and a small group of elite mulatto intellectuals, without public input (*Mujer* 122, James 263). James's assessment is that Louverture neglected (266) or punished (277-80) the plurality of black Haitians, losing critical support, while he made excessive concessions to the planters and mulattoes who conspired against him and the Revolution in spite of his good faith toward them (165, 240, 358-62). In *Mujer*, as opposed to *La isla* or Carpentier's *El reino de este mundo*, James's analysis is reinforced (*Mujer* 176, James 300-29, 333).

This is remarkable in light of the more abstract, Carpentier-influenced framing of the Haitian Revolution that had appeared in the chapter "Fernando Ortiz: el Caribe y la posmodernidad" in *La isla* (161-67), already mentioned to have undergone a sort of revision in *Mujer*. As in Carpentier's *El reino de este mundo,* the passage in *La isla* focuses on the Haitian Revolution in light of a counter-Enlightenment voudoun archive: "[E]n Haití, y por extension en las naciones más africanizadas del Caribe, las creencias supersincréticas constituyen un discurso que hace contacto con ramales de otros muchos discursos […]" (*La isla* 167).

The concluding citation regarding Maryse's Saint-Domingue narrative, referring to Maryse's and Sansay's versions of the emigration from Le Cap to Baracoa, likewise presents a contrast between a pro-revolutionary account (Maryse and James) and a planter émigré point of view (Sansay). The three topics that the elderly Henriette indicates appear in both Maryse's and Sansay's accounts are, to recap, (1) the plague of yellow fever, (2) the death of Leclerc, and (3) "above all" the "orgiastic tyranny of Rochambeau" (*Mujer* 184-85). The yellow fever, as described by Sansay, is viewed from a private perspective. It exacerbates the melancholy of her sister Clara, whose greatest suffering is due to her "vain, illiterate, talkative" husband (63). Maryse, by contrast, refers to the intense public climate of terror caused by the spread of the disease and a general scene of horror:

> Pronto no hubo médicos que se ocuparan de los enfermos. La gente moría en la calle. [….] Centenares y centenares de cadáveres insepultos. Los echaban al mar, y volvían. El hedor era horrible. (184)

With regard to the death of Leclerc, Maryse reports laconically, "Leclerc murió" (184). Sansay, on the other hand, expresses passionate outrage at Leclerc's ineffectiveness and cowardice in fighting "the negroes," while she praises the counterrevolutionary efforts of the Creoles and American volunteers:

> The guarde nationale, composed chiefly of Creoles, did wonders. The American captains and sailors volunteered their services: they fought bravely, and many of them perished. The negroes were repulsed; but if they gained no ground they lost none […]. The pusillanimous General Le Clerc, shrinking from the danger […] thought only of saving himself. He sent his plate and valuable effects […] and was preparing to embark secretly with his suite […]. The ensuing morning presented a dreadful spectacle. [….] The general, shut up in his house, would see nobody; ashamed, […] a fever seized him and he died in three days. (69)

The greatest point of difference, emphasized by the qualitative "sobre todo," is with regard to the interpretation of Rochambeau's "orgiastic tyranny." The worst thing about Rochambeau for Sansay is that he is revealed to be a disappointing cad, in his courtship of Sansay's sister, as he fails to confront her cruel husband (102), and in his execution of a Creole named Feydon for what amounts to an extreme case of tax evasion (104-105).

When she describes a case of Rochambeau's "punishment" of "three negroes […] caught setting fire to a plantation near the town" by having them burned alive in public, Sansay expresses disapproval for "giving a bad example to the negroes, who will not fail to retaliate on the first prisoners they take" (104). However, the event sets up the problem of Feydon's being shot by a fellow Creole for having failed to "pay into the treasury" as a comparatively heinous deed "which has absolutely chilled the heart of the people":

> [The executioner] was a Creole, the friend, the companion of the unfortunate Feydon. Ah! How could he submit to be the vile instrument of tyranny? (104)

By contrast, Maryse describes a pogrom of "white terror" committed against women, children, and the adversaries of empire. Rochambeau is a "pig" ("ese cerdo") on account of racist, inhumane treatment:

> ¡Si supieras las cosas que he visto! Negras empaladas en lanzas de caballería. Perros royendo huesos de niños […]. Hombres vomitando sus excrementos. Les metían cartuchos de pólvora en el culo […] (184)

This is a final point of close correspondence, out of an extended series of them, with James's book (358-59). The section on Portelance, based primarily on James, raises the question of whether *Mujer* also reinforces James's thesis that the 1959 Cuban revolution should be considered a legitimate heir to Dessaline's consolidation of the Haitian independence that L'Ouverture had left unrealized (395). Maryse seems to give an affirmative indication in Havana:

> Aquí nadie sabe de guerras ni de revoluciones ni de viajes de óperas ni de libros ni de nada. [….] No han despertado aún. La historia no los ha llamado. (429)

Maryse's historical judgment on revolution in the Caribbean is debatable, given her record with Portelance and Robledo, but what is unambiguous in the novel is the reiterative pattern of greed, disruption, and oppression demonstrated by formerly ruling émigré groups of plutocratic, noble, or merely "white" origin once they are restored to power and/or territory (184-85, 419-20, 429, 455). Finally, by making reference to Sansay, *Mujer* implies early the early U.S. imperialistic designs of the conspiratorial Aaron Burr in the trans-Atlantic, trans-Caribbean dynamic of Haitian revolutionary history:

> To his many critics, numbering among them the current president [Thomas Jefferson], Aaron Burr remained dangerous, his designs suspect. [….] He did travel west along the Ohio and down the Mississippi along the border of the newly acquired Louisiana territories. Rumor had it that he was assembling an army with the intent of capturing New Orleans, forming a new empire in Mexico, or […] marching on Washington. Whatever his intent, Burr numbered Leonora Sansay among his associates. [….] The Burr Conspiracy belongs as much to the history of the Haitian Revolution as it does to the intrigues of political partisanship in the Early Republic. (Drexler 30-31)

By way of synthesis, Henriette is brought to Cuba by a circuitous, chance "navigation" through the double textualities represented by Maryse, both of which involve a revised version of Benítez Rojo's theory of the Caribbean presented in *La isla:* principles of improvised performance as a poetics of survival and negotiation of polyrhythmic transcultural processes, in addition to the concrete circumstances of Maryse's movement from Saint-Domingue to Cuba along with the socio-economic technologies of the sugar plantation system.

4.8 The Island of Juana de León

By the time Henriette finally arrives in Cuba, the most important questions and tropes raised in the Cuban documentation about Enriqueta Faber have been answered, marginalized, or subverted in the novel. These include the questions about her moral (191-92) and professional (416-19) education; why she came to Cuba (419-20); and about her sexuality (325-31) and "competency" for both medical practice (452-53) and authentic participation in same-sex marriage (479-82). The question of "dementia" is transferred to apply to the unspecified, degenerative mental condition of Robledo, which becomes more acute the closer he is to Havana and to his social role as slaveholding plantation owner in the metropolis (430-31, 440). During the excursion that Maryse, Robledo, and Henriette take to the decentered tobacco-producing region of Vuelta Abajo, Robledo's memory "hadn't failed him even one time" ("Maryse [estuvo] muy contenta al

comprobar que la memoria de Robledo no había fallado siquiera una vez desde nuestra salida de La Habana," 440). The text presents an intertextual connection to Ortiz's discourse on the cultivation and commerce of tobacco in Cuba as a form of art, a labor of love, and a source of year-round self-employment and national sovereignty, in contrast to the dehumanizing, colonizing, and enslaving social and economic force of sugar production:

> Cuidado mimoso en el tabaco y abandono confiante en el azúcar, faena continua en uno y labor intermitente en la otra […]; [L]ibertad y esclavitud; artesanía y peonaje; manos y brazos; hombres y máquinas; finura y tosquedad. En el cultivo: el tabaco trae el veguerío y el azúcar crea el latifundio. [….] En el comercio: para nuestro tabaco todo el mundo por Mercado, y para nuestro azúcar un solo mercado en el mundo. Centripismo y centrifugación. Cubanidad y extranjería. Soberanía y coloniaje. Altiva corona y humilde saco. (Ortiz, *Contrapunteo* 140)

Robledo relates tobacco, and the salutary mental climate that the friends find in Vuelta Abajo, to gender parity:

> Dada la insistencia de mi amigo ("En Cuba fuman todos los hombres y no pocas mujeres; se vería extraño que usted no lo hiciera"), encendí un puro, cuyo humo, fuerte y aromático, me enseñaría a paladear y a exhalar a costa de atragantamientos y mareos. (439)

By contrast, back in Havana, after Henriette had diagnosed Robledo's illness as "un caso precoz de demencia senil" (431), Maryse had confided in Henriette that she had been caught in the "trap" of the sugar plantation, repeating the experience of Saint-Domingue, except with no possible escape:

> El caso de Claudette se repite con tanta o más frecuencia que en el viejo Saint-Domingue. [….] Al casarme con Robledo, al vivir en Cuba, caí en una trampa de lo que no me es posible escapar. Claro, pude haberlo abandonado […]. ¿Pero qué vida, acaso no le debo a él mi vida, acaso no lo quiero y me siento querida por él como nunca me han querido? Así, he llegado a ser una prisionera de mi propia conciencia. (432)

After Maryse drowns in Havana with a soon completely mentally-deteriorated Robledo, Henriette accepts the post on the Protomedicato of Baracoa. Thus "dementia" leads her to the position, but it is the dementia of the Cuban sugar plantation economy. The famous bishop Espada appears in Havana, then, attending Maryse's salon with members of Arango's Sociedad Económica de Amigos del País (435). What is more, the Espada of *Mujer* is a former refugee from the Haitian Revolution and the yellow fever epidemic (435). After the demise of her friend, Henriette remains affected by her influence.

Baracoa was one of the first, key sites to which the sugar estates of Saint-Domingue were transplanted, following the consolidation of the Haitian revolution by Dessalines in 1804. This is partly on account of investments from Baracoa and Santiago de Cuba in the Saint-Domingue plantations, immediate commercial ties across the

Windward Passage, and geographical proximity and similarity (Cruz Ríos 36-39). When Henriette arrives, she is struck by the impression of redundancy of a "repeating island" (465) and regressive isolation (470). Her first sight of Juanita is framed by a scene of natural description in the narrative style of an explorer:

> Las frutas maduraban al alcance de la mano, en particular la cherimoya, la guayaba y el marañón, cuya deliciosa nuez se comía tostada. Adheridos a los troncos de las palmas y los cocoteros, de los cedros y las guásimas, podían verse los caracoles de mayor colorido que uno pudiera imaginar […]. (468)

Henriette self-consciously alludes to her use of the bucolic mode just before introducing Juana: "He contado esto no para dármelas de naturalista ni de exploradora, sino para que se vea que mi estancia en aquella tierra de agrestes soledades, donde la única riqueza era la del Reino Natural, distaba de ser indeseable" (469).

This calls to mind the Edenic locus amoenus developed in the chronicle of Christopher Columbus's second voyage (1494), when the "the land of Juana," the name given to Cuba in tribute to the archdeacon of Seville Juan Rodríguez de Fonseca (Columbus 84n) is described. It is the origin of the epithet "la tierra más hermosa que ojos vieron," used to assert Cuban exceptionality, but in the context of Columbus's texts, it actually describes the series of islands and islets that the expedition views more favorably, from the vantage point of what would be the southern part of the Windward Passage:

> [A]y diferencia en gran manera de esta jente d´esta tierra Juana á las otras de todas las islas comarcanas, y eso mesmo ay en las aves […] que todas son de mejor condición y más mansas. [O]tro día, de salir del sol, miraron de encima del mástel, y vieron la mar llena de islas á todos quatro vientos; y todas verdes y llenas de árboles, la cosa más fermosa que ojos bieron […]. (131)

The case of Juana and Baracoa, then, is minimized in its marginalized place of redundancy in the novel, denying the Cuban exceptionality that the Enriqueta Faber documentation is supposed to reinforce. The *coup de grace* in *Mujer* is to deny the exceptional genealogy attributed to De León's second, redeeming marriage to Eduardo Chicoy in versions of the Faber legend such as "El Dr. Enrique Faver" (1919) by Ernesto De las Cuevas Morillo. In De las Cuevas, Chicoy is an honorable gentleman of upper-class Baracoa society –"un apuesto joven, de aspecto y modales de refinada cultura y de respectable posición económica" (164)—who salvages Juana's honor by marrying her and producing a lineage of "very esteemed members of this society," including an officer of the Cuban army also named Eduardo Chicoy (166). By contrast, the Chicoy of *Mujer* is "el escribano más joven y pobre de Baracoa" (470), crass, pretentious, and parasitical (477-79, 482-84). Finally, being Juana's cousin, their coupling –as a denial of the potential "cultural contamination" between Henriette and De León— indicates only an inbred lineage, at the expense of Enriqueta Faber.

4.9 Conclusion: The Progression of Enriqueta Faber's Last Archival Meditations

The elderly Henriette in New York comes to critically interpret her own historical project as memoirist. She begins with the awareness of the omissions she makes, first through stylistic editing, e.g., "taché con tinta roja muchos adjetivos innecesarios" (68-69). Next, she worries about the *a priori* cognitive processes by which she selects and associates memories, lending her archival project a fictional quality (198). Finally, after having written about the way she had procured a legal double identity for Enrique Fuenmayor in receiving documentation of French citizenship under that name, she has the epiphany that the history she had been intending to write had turned out to be a novel:

> Extrañará que hable ahora de novela y no de memorias. Es que, después de pasarme una semana leyendo con calma mis papeles […] he acabado por concluir que este manuscrito que obsesivamente escribo, corto y recorto en partes y secciones, releo y corrijo, ajusto y reajusto, es en definitiva una novela. Véase si no: he arrojado al olvido centenares de personas […] he suprimido incontables experiencias, impresiones y episodios que por su frondosidad le hacían sombra a ciertos pasajes que me interesaba destacar y […] he ocultado […] aquello que me ha parecido imprudente revelar. (376)

After this point, she develops a naturalistic metaphor for the process of attempting to write her history, setting up a contrastive allusion to a famous meditative scene on

history from Carpentier's novel of trans-Atlantic revolutionary resonances, *El siglo de las luces* (1962). She compares the writing of her own history to the secretion and hardening of a conch shell:

> Cuarenta años de mi vida se secarían en el tintero. [….] Y con todo, ahora se me ha empezado a abrir una puerta, la boca reveladora de un caracol, mi relato no son estas páginas que lees sino aquello que mi carne ha escrito en el tiempo, escritura, sumergida, letras de agua y limo, tinta invisible que ni siquiera yo misma puedo sacar a flote. (459-60)

In contrast, the scene in *El siglo de las luces* presents, according to González Echevarría's commentary, Carpentier's revised configuration of the recurrence of historical events, from the "daemonic circle" of *El reino de este mundo* (1949) to the spiral with a movable center, debuted in *El siglo de las luces:*

> El caracol era el Mediador entre lo evanescente, lo escurrido, la fluidez sin ley ni medida, y la tierra de las cristalizaciones […] donde todo era asible y ponderable. [….] Fijación de desarrollos lineales, volutas legisladas, arquitecturas cónicas de una maravillosa precisión, equilibrios de volúmenes, arabescos tangibles que intuían todos los barroquismos por venir. (*El siglo* 155)

This penultimate archival meditation of the elderly Faber seems to suggest, by a second case of imitation of Carpentier, a distancing from the baroque poetics of Benítez Rojo's previous influence and model. *Mujer* inverts Carpentier's poetics of an epic, trans-

oceanic sweep of history that nonetheless focuses on positing the baroque as a Cuban national ontology. Her final reflection is intensely personal, expressing the simple determination to leave a "tentative, necessarily open ending" to her text, which is not her life:

> Acabo de recobrarme del ataque de melancolía en que me dejó mi última página. La última, digo, porque sé que no tengo fuerzas para continuar. Cierto que alcancé a componer una suerte de final, final contingente, interino […]. En fin, para qué seguir, y con todo –he pensado— aun cuando me fuera posible alumbrar con la pluma mucho de lo que he vivido, habría que concluir que mi relato también acabaría en un final tentativo, necesariamente abierto, y entonces igual me lamentaría de haber escrito una obra inconclusa. Y tal vez mi vida no sea más que eso […], pequeña y en suspenso como una coma, pero con la determinación de seguir y seguir. ¿Quién sabe? (507-08)

The reification of history in Carpentier is here replaced by the sentimental expression of present-tense, improvisational poetics by the transcultured, aged Faber, apart from Cuban or Caribbean exceptionality.

Conclusion

The novels by Roberto G. Fernández, Ana Menéndez, and Antonio Benítez Rojo are distinct in their aesthetic and hermeneutic approaches to Cuban and U.S. historical frames. The analysis of each of the three novels in this dissertation was oriented by the individual work's framing narrative logic. In *La vida es un special*, the framing narrative is the broad, oneiric, and dystopian mythology of Big Sugar in the South Floridan exile community. In this case, finding the applicable frame of revisionist Cuban independence history, by 1940s-era scholars like Griñán Peralta, Guerra y Sánchez, and Roig y Leuchsenring, and by the younger generation of postcolonialist U.S. Cuban historians like Louis A. Pérez, Jr. and Marifeli Pérez-Stable, is fundamental to reconstruct the basic plot at the level of the community. This is a task that the novel's framing, fictional Cuban exile historian Manuel de Zequeira (who Fernández bases on a Cuban early-nineteenth-century creole poet) neglects. In asserting a communitarian interpretation of the Sugar People within a Golden Age rhetoric of honor, a view that fails to take into account collusion with U.S. imperialism, class conflict, and systemic racism, Fernández's Zequeira distorts Spanish, Cuban, and U.S. history beyond recognition. Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas, an inadvertent early influence in the formation of Cuba's sugar plantation economy, appears in the novel as a Communist infiltrator interfering with the Constitutional Assembly, according to Fernández's Zequeira. In contrast Zequeira seems to denounce the Escalera Conspiracy, the 1848 pogrom of white terror to inhibit any

recurrence of the Haitian Revolution in western Cuba, as an outrageous fiction. Thus, while most critics consider Fernández's novel as an avant-garde exercise in code-switching word play and carnivalesque narrative (what Sánchez Boudy would label as frivolous choteo or "inspired gibberish") our analysis shows that *La vida es un special* is built as an exacting critique of U.S. Cuban exile archival and historiographical practices dating from the nineteenth century up to the 1980s.

Loving Che, by contrast, invites interpretation according to the frame of popular romance fiction. History is sold as an intimate relationship of desire, but, in fact, the genre presents nostalgic material for consumption and profit. The fictional Cuban exile historian of this novel, Dr. Caraballo, competes with the author of Teresa's memoir to seduce the narrator into internalizing a distorted and grossly simplified version of revolutionary history for the purposes of material gain and social capital. Caraballo's Cuban exile history is portrayed as vampirish. On the island, the narrator is unable to connect with her family history because this history has become a commodity with great exchange value: it represents currency and *fe* (*f*amilia en el *e*xtranjero).

Mujer en traje de batalla salvages a footnote of national Cuban history and magnifies Henriette Faber's life story to panoramic, trans-Atlantic, trans-Caribbean dimensions. Discourses of Cuban national exceptionality are mitigated by the view of the island from within the broader Caribbean context of migrations and reiterations of plantation history, revolution, and counterrevolution. The nineteenth-century, planter-class Cuban exile historian Francisco Calcagno is contradicted, and his mockery of Faber

is made to seem ridiculous. The twentieth-century Cuban exile historian Leví Marrero bears a more sympathetic resemblance to the good-faith efforts of the octogenarian Henriette, but the rhetoric of facticity and communitarian totality (Marrero as the keeper of the archive until post-Castro restoration) are dismantled by the dossier-like scrutiny of the dense layers of fiction underlying the documentation of the historical Faber orchestrated by the novel.

All three novels convey anxiety before the threat of encroachment in Cuba and the Caribbean by Cuban exile groups, the investigation of anomalous facts underlying communitarian national and ethnic historical narratives, and against *a priori* nationalistic archives. On a fundamental level, each of the novels vindicates the Cuban revolution against the conventional émigré discursive tropes deligitimizing it. In Fernández and Benítez Rojo, revolution is portrayed within the context of Caribbean independence history, as a necessary outcome of the colonialist sugar plantation, or simply, the socioeconomic system dominated by the monoculture of sugar. The personal independence attempted in *Loving Che* is achieved through dialogue on and with the island. In sum, the three novels cohere, as investigative works of historical fiction, based on rigorous research methods, in support of Cuban and Caribbean independence. They engage historical discourses that legitimize the Cuban revolution mostly on the matrix established by the critical Cuban exile social psychologist and Areíto intellectual Lourdes Casal.

The anti-communitarian outlook extends to the withholding of approval of the Cuban revolutionary government and nationalistic discourses of Cuban exceptionalism. Cuban officialism is criticized most directly in Menéndez. Benítez Rojo minimizes the importance of state bureaucracy and Havana in the development of Cuban culture, focusing instead on the trans-Caribbean space of the Windward Passage. The topic of Cuban officialism is avoided in Fernández's work until the novel *Holy Radishes.* In *Holy Radishes*, members of the Committee for the Defense of the Revolution are portrayed like other typical Fernández characters: they are motivated by ordinary self-interest and instinct but hide behind grandiose constructs of community and a deluded perception of self. The Cuban officials in *Holy Radishes* are not demonized as internationalist communist militants, as are the villains of much Cuban exile literature of protest. Instead, they demonstrate a lack of any kind of revolutionary commitment except to resolve the cognitive dissonance between who they think they are and what they are actually doing.

Likewise the novels clash with the rhetoric of alienation vs. assimilation underlying much of U.S. Latino literature. In Fernández, the longstanding, unequal proximity of U.S. and Caribbean histories and interconnected cultures contradict exile clichés of disorientation and lamented alienation reproduced by characters like Toto Lamartiné. Bilingualism and the use of English are portrayed as socioculturally-conditioned choices and performances. Monolingual English-speaking characters, like the tourists Charlie and his wife, are comically oblivious not only to what is going on

around them in the Miami enclave when they visit, but also to the shared histories of the United States, Latin America, and the Caribbean. They are humorous, powerless characters that represent a putatively dominant culture only in their own minds, in contrast to the multilingual government, business, and Church officials. On the other hand, monolingual Spanish-speaking characters are shown to simply have a limited range of communicative options but are still not immune to language change in Spanish. Language is portrayed as arbitrary, conventional, and as a dynamic social phenomenon in constant, complex change. The premise that second language acquisition leads to transformative, ontological assimilation is parodied in Dra. Alicia Real Valdés's theories in *La vida* while the related politics of U.S. English Only movements are more acerbically mocked in *Raining Backwards.* Menéndez's and Benítez Rojo's protagonists both use their multilingual competencies as an asset by which they engage their intellectual curiosity and openness to migration and travel. While the narrators of *Loving Che* and *Mujer en traje de batalla* are both aware of being situated in specific localities of the United States, neither views place as personal or cultural destiny. Both return to and leave Cuba several times as well as travel worldwide. Like Fernández, Benítez Rojo emphasizes the Latin American and Caribbean histories implicit in the construction of the United States as a nation and in U.S. history.

Although the works analyzed in this dissertation may be viewed as anti-communitarian with regard to the U.S. Cuban exile, socialist Cuba, and U.S. ethnic figurations, in a positive regard, they reframe the writing of Cuban, U.S. Cuban, and U.S.

histories in light of trans-Caribbean, trans-American, and trans-Atlantic connections. A surprising element that was observed during the analysis of the novels is their common, critical emphasis on gender performance. To a significant degree, the third space of dialogue from exile presented in the works is construed as a queer space. *La vida* critiques an anachronistic, *machista* Catholic rhetoric of honor among exile characters. The importance of this element, which is related to questions of recolonization, racial discrimination, and the restoration of a Cuban aristocracy, is underscored by the reference of the novel's title to the seventeenth-century honor play *La vida es sueño.* Ortiz's theory of transculturation, in its figuration as a counternarrative against the homogenization and exploitation of a colonized "sugar people," is seemingly related to the transgression of the community's norms of gender in *La vida* in religion (San Given), marriage (the Pérez and Espriella families), and history (Eloy). *Loving Che* is predicated on the critical rejection of claims of national ascent and kinship that are based on hypermasculine history and written as popular heterosexual romance. *Mujer en traje de batalla* contests the nationalistic appropriation of the marginal figure of Henriette Faber in narrating her itinerant, trans-European, trans-Atlantic, and trans-Caribbean intimate history. Cuba is reduced to a site of "homosocial" rejection of the foreign, queer Other and of the island's place in Caribbean and global economies and flows of history. At the same time, the relations between the state bureaucrat (Chicoy) and self-syled creole nobility (León) posit a monstruous, incestuous national genealogy. The late-nineteenth-century New York Cuban exile of Calcagno, dedicated to staking claims of Cuban nationality favorable to

the interests of the creole planter class, is likewise played down in favor of the fictional Faber's writing from and about Manhattan.

Generational paradigms for approaching U.S. Cuban and other Latino literatures as ethnic subcategories of U.S. literature are partially reinforced by the works studied in this dissertation, primarily in terms of the choice of language in writing. Benítez Rojo, a first-generation émigré from Cuba, writes in Spanish; Fernández, a member of the one-and-a-half generation, writes in a bilingual and interlingual hybrid of Spanish and English; and Menéndez, a second generation U.S. Cuban writer, produced an English-language novel. In terms of affective distance from Cuba and the nostalgic discourse of exile, however, the predicted generational progression is not observed.

Further directions for research include a study of Roberto G. Fernández's *La montaña rusa* (1983), *Raining Backwards* (1988), and *Holy Radishes!* (1995) in light of the paradigm of historical fiction established in *La vida es un special.* Also warranted is a further examination of linkages between Francophone and Hispanic Caribbean discourses in the work of Antonio Benítez Rojo and, in relation to this thesis's theoretical terms, a more concentrated focus on the concept of dissonance in musicological rhetoric developed by Alejo Carpentier in the works in which he examines European discourses of Western musical composition and the appropriation of elements of Afro-Caribbean ethnomusicology.

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